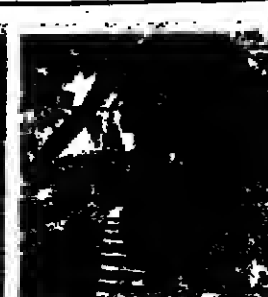


DEBORAH ROSS INTERVIEW
ANN WIDDECOMBE:
THE TORIES' VIRGIN SOLDIER
PAGES 13



MEDIA+
ANATOMY OF A
TABLOID COUP
PLUS APPOINTMENTS



INTERNATIONAL
AFTER MOBUTU,
THE REVENGE
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Labour newcomer reveals her long-lost son – and turns tables on the tabloids



Best friends: Ann Keen rediscovering her son, Mark Lloyd Fox, who she gave up for adoption after becoming pregnant at 17. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

When Ann Keen, the newly elected Labour MP for Brentford and Isleworth, read of Clare Short's reunion with the son she had given up for adoption, she was amazed.

She picked up the phone and told Ms Short: "That happened to me". For, a year earlier, she too had found her son, who had been adopted when he was a few days old.

The parallels with the Short story are remarkable. Mrs Keen found herself pregnant at 17 and felt she had no choice but to have the baby adopted. Mark Lloyd Fox, her son, has been active in the Tory party though he now describes himself as "a switcher" who has genuinely embraced Labour.

Mrs Keen has decided to talk publicly about Mark, who was brought up in Wales and is now seconded as Director of Development at the Commonwealth Institute, because she feels "under pressure to come clean even though I haven't done anything wrong". This pressure has come from a press agency employed by the Daily Mail, which members of Mrs Keen's family, including her 76-year-old mother, feel has been harassing them in order to find out about the adoption. Although Mrs Keen has not kept Mark a secret, she would have preferred "to have dealt with this in our own time, when the whole family has settled down".

Despite the photographs of

"Blair's babes" and the dawning of a new era in politics, there is a feeling at Westminster that dirt is being furiously sought on the new intake MPs, particularly the women, whose personal lives are being scrutinised.

Mrs Keen, whose husband Alan is also an MP, found herself pregnant in 1966. We may think of that time as the swinging Sixties, but Mrs Keen had received no sex education other than being told, "not to bring trouble home". When she did bring trouble home, she was sent away by her parents to the Brecon and Swansea Moral Welfare Association, which

By Suzanne Moore

But she was determined to see him again. "When the registrar came round and I had to name him, I had been reading a woman's magazine and had seen the name Jason. It may sound stupid now but at that time it seemed an unusual

thought of her child constantly, but, in 1992, when Labour lost the election, she 'went through a very rough patch'. "Everyone around me was grieving and talking about loss. Loss of a Labour government. I thought this is loss but nothing like the loss I know".

Mark, meanwhile, never knew that he was adopted, although he says he had a sense of being "different". He found out the truth by accident when he was 28 and was neither shocked nor angry. "It answered more questions than it raised and I just had this sense of urgency about wanting to find

was an indescribable feeling. Mrs Keen's first reaction was 'I'm sorry. I couldn't understand her sense of sorrow'.

Though they both felt euphoric Mrs Keen remembers the strangeness of the situation. "I didn't know how to deal with it. All these suppressed feelings just came out. Suddenly here was this man".

Mark laughed: "I just wanted to be with her." His mother said: "You're not a 'Tory are you'?"

Mrs Keen has since met Mark's adoptive mother. "In her words 'we will now share him'". The reunion took place during Mrs Keen's selection process as a Labour candidate. "If my performance was lacking it was because standing at the back of the hall was my son. I could hardly speak".

She now feels that her experience has made her more understanding. "When politicians mouth off about single mothers, I think 'You don't know what you are talking about'".

Mother and son are amazed at how similar they are. For Mark: "It's shot the nature versus nurture argument in the fact. We have the same sense of humour, often at other people's cost". Mrs Keen feels she has rediscovered her best friend. The recent Labour landslide was exciting, she says, but "I had my own landslide in 1995. There won't be anything that compares to it".

Bribes row MP: police called in

Fran Abrams and Ian Burrell

One of Labour's new MPs was facing a police investigation last night after reports that he had bribed a rival candidate in the general election.

The Secretary of State for Scotland, Donald Dewar, called in the police yesterday afternoon to investigate the allegation against Mohammed Sarwar, MP for Glasgow Govan.

Mr Sarwar, who strongly denies the claim, was forced to fly to London yesterday to explain himself to the party's Chief Whip, Nick Brown.

After the meeting, Mr Sarwar, Britain's first Muslim MP, issued a statement following reports in the *News of the World* and other newspapers that he had paid £5,000 to independent Labour candidate Badar Islam.

"The allegations made about me in today's newspapers are totally false. Therefore, in addition to co-operating with any police investigation, I will be consulting with my lawyers about taking out a writ for defamation," he said.

Mr Brown said that he would take no immediate disciplinary action, but would ask the party's National Executive Committee to decide whether it should report separately on the matter.

Labour sources were anxious to be seen to be taking a tough stance yesterday. During the general election, the party was critical of John Major for not forcing Neil Hamilton to stand down, suggesting that Tony Blair would have shown stronger leadership.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said that if the allegations

were proven there would be serious consequences.

"We made it clear before the election that we take such matters very seriously indeed and serious actions will flow if these allegations are found to be substantiated," he said on BBC television.

The *News of the World* claimed that Mr Sarwar twice asked Mr Islam to help him. Before the election he tried to per-

suade him to wind down his campaign, it said. He had promised "compensation," but no sum was mentioned.

After the election, the MP was at the centre of allegations of ballot-rigging made by a Scottish Unofficial Labour candidate, Peter Paton – a matter already under police investigation. The paper said he then gave Mr Islam £5,000 in cash – handed over during a meeting in a Mercedes – to discredit Mr Paton.

Almost from the moment he signalled his intention to become an MP, Mr Sarwar, the millionaire owner of a cash-and-carry business, has been at the centre of controversy. His selection for the Govan constituency followed a bitter battle with Mike Watson, the former Labour MP. Mr Watson had won the selection ballot by a single vote but was defeated by Mr Sarwar after Labour party bosses ordered a re-run following claims that some votes had been unfairly discounted.

Mr Sarwar was accused by sections of the Muslim community of bringing "shame on Islam" last year after a high-profile trip to Pakistan to "rescue" two Glasgow girls from forced marriages.

In the election Mr Sarwar held the seat for Labour with a 2,914 majority over Scottish National Party candidate Nicola Sturgeon, while Mr Islam polled 319 votes.

The Scottish National Party leader, Alex Salmond, wrote to the Prime Minister yesterday calling for "prompt and decisive action" over the allegations – a phrase used by Mr Blair about Neil Hamilton. "I presume that you will take such prompt and decisive action now in relation to the allegations..." he said.

Bribery is an offence under the 1983 Representation of the People Act, and anyone found guilty of it can be fined up to £5,000 and barred from public office. A disciplinary code accepted by the Parliamentary Labour Party before the election includes an offence of bringing the party into disrepute, for which an offender could be expelled from the party.

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Volatile French philosopher withdraws from sport



Poetry in motion: Eric Cantona, who announced his retirement yesterday

Steve Beggan

Eric Cantona, the footballer who quoted Rimbaud but brawled like Rambo, shook the world of soccer to its core yesterday by announcing his retirement from the game at the age of 31.

The unpredictable Frenchman, whose notoriety reached its peak with a kung-fu attack on a fan in 1995, said he wanted to quit while he was at the top after winning five Premiership titles in six years with Manchester United and Leeds.

Club directors were taken by surprise by Cantona's decision. In a statement read out at a hastily convened press conference, which the player did not attend, he said: "I have played pro-

fessional football for 13 years, which is a long time. I now wish to do other things. I have always planned to retire when I was at the top, and at Manchester United I have reached the pinnacle of my career."

Alex Ferguson, the United manager, had tried over several days to persuade the Frenchman to stay, but his mind was made up. Paying tribute to Cantona, he said: "Whenever fans discuss United's greatest ever side, you can be sure that for many Eric's name will be very high up on the list. He leaves with our best wishes and will always be welcome at Old Trafford. He has given us so many wonderful memories."

After a troubled career in France, Cantona moved to England, where he

quickly helped Leeds United to the Premiership title. He moved to Old Trafford in 1992 and went on to inspire the team to four championships including two league and cup doubles. He has become an idol for a generation of fans.

But he has been criticised, too, for the violent streak that saw him attack a Crystal Palace fan who was hurling insults at him from the terraces. It was after being sentenced to 120 hours community service for that attack that he demonstrated his penchant for homespun philosophy.

"When the seagulls follow the trawler, it is because they think that sardines will be thrown into the sea," he said, creating confusion in his trawler's metaphorical wake. More thoughts of

Eric Cantona were used in a series of Eurostar advertisements. Here, the footballer demonstrated his acting abilities – a career he would like to pursue.

He will always be remembered, however, for bringing poetry into the previously clogbombed English game. Once, when discussing football as art, he wrote: "An artist, in my eyes, is someone who can lighten up a dark room. I have never, and will never, find any difference between the pass from Pele to Carlos Alberto in the final of the World Cup in 1970 and the poetry of the young Rimbaud."

"There is, in each of these human manifestations, an expression of beauty which touches us and gives us a feeling of eternity."



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Union urges choice of academic as low-pay chief

The leader of Britain's biggest union yesterday urged the Government to appoint a truly independent chair for the Low Pay Commission and called for a national minimum wage more than a pound an hour higher than that favoured by many business leaders.

Having kept its collective head down during the election campaign, Unison, the 1.4m strong public service union, started its campaign to influence the commission being set up by Ian McCartney, Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry. Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of Unison, called for an "impartial" commission leader in the wake of news that Peter Jarvis, retiring chief executive of Whitbread, had been sounded out over the job. Mr Jarvis is known to favour a minimum wage of around £3.20, while Unison and other unions are seeking a figure struck at half male median earnings – a rate of up to £4.42.

Mr Bickerstaffe told *The Independent* yesterday: "I have been campaigning for a minimum wage for 31 years, so I am delighted that at last we're going to get an Act of Parliament. However, I think the chair should be an academic who everyone will see as independent. It would be stupid to appoint somebody that was seen to err on one side or the other."

Barrie Clement

Failing schools to be named

Up to a dozen failing schools considered to be moving too slowly towards recovery will be named this week by the new schools standards minister, Stephen Byers. They will be among those which have languished for longest – up to two years – on the failing list without making significant progress. Following an emergency review of the progress of all 281 schools on the list, those targeted will each be given a set of proposals for immediate action.

Measures to kick-start improvements are likely to include persuading local education authorities to send in "hero heads" – successful heads temporarily parachuted in from their own thriving schools, a tactic that worked at the Ridings School in Halifax, West Yorkshire where acting head Peter Clark has been on loan for two terms from his own school, Rastrick High. Ministers may also put pressure on LEAs to send in more governors and target extra resources, advice and support on persistent failures.

Lucy Ward

'Cheers' crosses the ocean



London's West End is to get its own version of the Boston bar Cheers, which spawned a star-studded hit television show which ended in 1993 after 11 years and 10 series. A 70-seater bar and 120-seater restaurant – a replica of the television set – is being built in Regent Street. It will open in August and the UK Cheers company hopes that Cheers stars such as Ted Danson, who played the bar manager Sam (pictured), Woody Hartsell and Shelley Long will attend a charity gala in September. Projects are also planned for Newcastle upon Tyne, Manchester, Bristol and Leeds.

Nurses shortfall reaches 18,000

National Health Service hospitals are facing a shortage of nurses which is posing the biggest current threat to standards of care, the Royal College of Nursing said yesterday. At least 18,000 nursing jobs are vacant, with key areas such as intensive care worst hit.

Speaking on the eve of the college's annual conference in Harrogate, Christine Hancock, RCN general secretary, said nurses had been repelled by the commercialism of the internal market and welcomed the Government's plans to dismantle it. Shortages were "currently the biggest threat to the health service, especially in all our major cities", she said, adding that attracting nurses back depended on conditions such as childcare arrangements and shift patterns as much as pay. "The NHS is one of the worst employers in terms of flexibility," she said.

Jeremy Laurance

New Labour, new culture

The Department of National Heritage could soon be renamed the Ministry of Culture. The Secretary of State, Chris Smith, said that he and colleagues were looking to change the name of the department to reflect the "forward-looking nature" of its role. "At the moment, of course, although heritage is a very important part of what the department does, it's only a part and it's a name that really has a flavour of the past about it. Whereas this is a department which primarily is interested in the future – all the work on film, broadcasting, the media and the cultural life of the country," he told Sky TV's *Sunday* programme.

Forget the storm with an X film

Lightning struck, and suddenly X-rated entertainment flashed onto hundreds of people's television screens. Engineers were working at the weekend to fix damage from the lightning on Friday night which disabled the equipment that normally scrambles the signal of TVX Fantasy Channel to stop non-subscribers watching adult films. London-based Bell Cable Media said it had received a number of calls, mostly from people who wanted to make sure they were not being charged for the movies.

Five share £6.6m lottery jackpot

Five tickets will share Saturday's National Lottery £6.6m jackpot. The winning numbers were 9, 2, 13, 18, 27 and 48; bonus 24.

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people



Kathy Burke, voted best actress, and the Spice Girls who invaded Cannes last week

The Eel and the Cherry share the Palm in Cannes

The 50th Cannes Film Festival last night awarded a joint Golden Palm best film prize to the Japanese director, Shohei Imamura, for *The Eel*, and Abbas Kiarostami, the Iranian director for *The Taste of the Cherry*, a surprise decision.

Most critics at the French Riviera resort had seen no outright favourite for the money-spinning top prize, which was awarded by the jury.

The jury president, the French actress Isabelle Adjani, announced a special 50th anniversary prize, awarded to Egypt's Youssef Chahine for all his work. *The Sweet Hereafter*, by Canada's Atom Egoyan, won a runner-up Grand Jury Prize.

Sean Penn was voted best actor for *She's so Lovely*, by fellow American Nick Cassavetes, and Kathy Burke was voted best actress for *Nil by Mouth*, by Britain's Gary Oldman.

But the critics weren't impressed. "Quality-wise this year has been very average. Just a few years ago, and even more so 20 years ago, there was a masterpiece a day at the festival," said Michel Clement, who edits the French film magazine *Positif*.

"What is serious this year is that there were no ma-

jor discoveries outside the competition," he said.

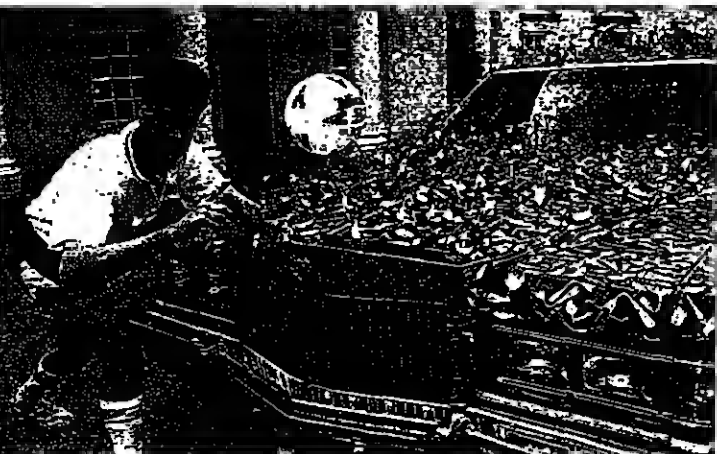
Wim Wenders for example, "McGowan said. "This year there was too much of an emphasis on stars. There were much better films for the competition than Johnny Depp's *The Brave*, but organisers wanted him and possibly Marlon Brando so it got in," he said.

Surveys by Screen International and Moving Pictures had put Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm*, about a New York suburban family, and Curtis Hanson's fast-paced thriller, *A Confession*, in a narrow lead.

Outsiders also tipped by Cannes critics to pick up big prizes included Oldman's partly autobiographical *Nil by Mouth*, and Michael Winterbottom's *Welcome to Sarajevo*, about a television journalist's adoption of a Bosnian child.

Mr Clement opted for Egoyan's film because it "is very rich and complex, and because it's his seventh film and he's at the stage where he needs a major reward".

Violence in many films – set in the French director Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element*, or wife-beating in Oldman's movie, among others – dampened birthday celebrations.



Geller to use his powers to win votes

He can bend a spoon as well as anyone in the world; but can Uri Geller wrap the voters around his little finger?

He thinks he can, and he wants to run for office in the Israeli Knesset. Geller, born in Israel but now living in Britain, said he was considering moving back to his homeland before Israel's next election in the year 2000.

"There's no doubt in my mind that I will have a very large voting power. Maybe it will be a huge landslide," he said yesterday.

Geller said Middle East violence and failed peace efforts had prompted him to contact associates in Israel to verify his election prospects. "If with my connections, which believe me I have, I'll be able to reach some leaders in Iran and Syria, I'll be able to advance peace very quickly," he said, describing his connections as both political and spiritual.

Geller declined to discuss his political orientation but said he did not support the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, whose building of settlements in the occupied West Bank has crippled the peace process.

"I'm definitely not for the current government. I don't have animosity or hatred for anyone but I just don't think things are happening the right way," he said.

Polar 'hell' for explorers adrift

Four British women plucked to safety during a polar expedition after spending four days awaiting rescue from a drifting ice pack, last night described their "hellish" ordeal. The team, including the Queen Mother's great niece Rosie Clayton-Sancer, spent the time huddled in a tent in minus 40C temperatures, surrounded by steadily-cracking ice.

As the threat of disappearing into the black water intensified, their fuel supplies began to run out as a "race against time" rescue operation took place. By the time a plane braved the deteriorating conditions to reach them on Saturday night, they each had just six pieces of chocolate to survive.

The women – Mrs Clayton-Sancer, 37, Andre Chadwick, 32, Sarah Jones, 28 and Juliette May, 33 – were competing in the McVitie's Penguin Polar Relay, and were part of the first all-female expedition to the North Pole.

At base camp last night, Mrs Clayton-Sancer said: "We got caught in this hellish situation – we were stranded, stuck in our tent on driving ice."

"We got into problems because we had finished our allotted time and had found a landing place for the plane but the conditions weren't right for it to come and fetch us."

briefing

DEFENCE

Trials to make 'friendly fire' a thing of the past

Trials of revolutionary identification systems which could herald the end of "friendly fire" incidents which tragically mangled many in the Gulf War are under way this week. Friendly fire incidents accounted for almost a fifth of the 615 allied personnel killed or injured in the Gulf.

Western governments acknowledge that it is no longer politically acceptable to see troops killed by their own side, and now, after years of laboratory work, Britain, the US, France and Germany are testing different solutions for a battlefield identification friend or foe (IFF) system.

The British system has been developed by the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency together with CEC-Maroni and St Andrew's University. It is planned to fit all friendly vehicles with a transmitter emitting a low-power laser or millimetre wave signal and a receiver.

Trials of aircraft systems are due to take place in the US at the end of the year.

COMMUNICATIONS

Phone service complaints increase

Complaints about premium-rate telephone services rose 10 per cent last year, mainly because of the rapid growth in international sex lines.

There was a 20-fold increase in the number of international lines investigated, according to the Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services. The watchdog stepped up its monitoring to address poor compliance levels.

In all, fines imposed during the year exceeded £90,000. Misleading advertising and service content were still the most common causes for public complaint, accounting for more than a quarter of complaints.

Instances of unreasonable delay, although decreasing, were also a common cause for complaint. In one case, a live tarot line company was permanently barred from operating premium-rate services when it was discovered

that callers were being deliberately kept on hold for up to half an hour at a time.

"Premium rate services are hugely popular with the public. Most of the 4 million or so calls made to them each week don't cause problems," said Baroness Dean, chairman of ICSTIS. "However, some companies continue to flout the rules and so we must remain vigilant to make sure consumers are properly protected."

Glenda Cooper

ADVERTISING

Charity campaign pulls no punches

The NSPCC is using a hard-hitting image of child abuse on closed-circuit TV in a new advertising campaign that has been inspired by the image of Jamie Bulger being led away by his murderers. The three new ads, which are unveiled on 3,500 posters today, show children being violently abused in order to highlight the dangers to children of physical violence.

The £500,000 campaign has been sponsored by BT, uses the excuses that are sometimes used to cover up physical abuse such as "He slipped in the bath" or "She ran into the door".

Saatchi & Saatchi, the charity's advertising agency filmed actors with a low-quality TV camera and then played that back on a TV and photographed the screen. The agency wanted a grainy image that would look like a closed-circuit TV or hidden camera scene from a documentary. The typed lettering of the excuses is supposed to be reminiscent of a social worker's notes.

Marian Rose, a spokeswoman for the NSPCC, said the advertising was a departure from typical charity advertising. "People just don't do a stereotypical charity ad anymore. They see the instantly recognisable black and white shot and with bold lettering below it, think 'oh, charity' and then automatically switch off." Paul McCann

INDUSTRY

Ending part-time prejudice

Firms are finding it difficult to recruit part-timers because people mistakenly feel the work is badly paid and a dead end, according to a new report.

Traditional prejudices against part-time work discourage many people, especially women returning to work after a career break, from applying, said marketing firm CPM. The company, which aims to recruit 1,500 mainly part-time workers over the next year, said many people had outdated perceptions of part-time work.

Director Matt Rowland-Jones said: "If part-time jobs are to be filled and people helped back into the labour market, then the public's perception of part-time working must be changed dramatically."

Companies should offer flexible hours, competitive wages, holiday pay, training and a structured career path, he suggested.

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God inspired me, says Widdecombe

Kim Sengupta

The hand of God is behind today's potentially explosive Commons debate in which Ann Widdecombe is set to accuse Michael Howard of lying to Parliament. She is, literally, on a divine mission.

The former prisons minister told yesterday how she believes that it was the Almighty who told her to set off on her crusade against Mr Howard over the sacking of the Prison Service director-general, Derek Lewis.

Ms Widdecombe, a recently converted Catholic, declared that she has

prayed "consistently" for help from God as she continues her bitter public feud with her former boss, which threatens to scupper his chances of becoming the leader of the Conservative Party.

Speaking on the BBC Radio programme *Sunday*, she said: "I prayed a great deal, particularly when Derek Lewis was taken to court."

"I prayed that the truth would come out. And all the time a voice was saying to me: 'It is all very well saying the truth would come out; you have got the truth, and you have not put it out. What are you battering Heaven's gate for?'"

Asked who she believed the voice belonged to, Ms Widdecombe replied: "I think that when I am praying to God, I am being answered."

Yesterday Ms Widdecombe cancelled her threatened plan to go to Mr Howard's home to deliver details of the charges she intends to make against him in the House.

The former home secretary had complained that Ms Widdecombe's visit, undoubtedly accompanied by the media, would put pressure on him and his wife, Sandra.

An approach was made on his behalf to Ms Widdecombe by Rachel Whetstone, part of his campaign

team. Ms Widdecombe told the *Independent*: "I was merely going to give him the opportunity of seeing the outline of my case, as custom dictates."

"However his side said there were people camped outside his house, and this was putting pressure. So I have agreed to get the material to him another way."

"What I did not want to do is give Michael Howard the opportunity to distract people from what I have to say in the House tomorrow by claiming that I had been responsible for a media circus outside his home. I want him to be fully rested, and

refreshed when he listens to what I have to say about his behaviour."

This morning Ms Widdecombe will also learn whether she will get access to documents, locked away in the Home Office, which would prove whether or not Mr Howard had misled MPs.

The papers in question refer to contemporaneous notes taken by Mr Howard's parliamentary private secretary, Miss J MacNaughten, during a meeting with Mr Lewis over the fate of the governor of Parkhurst Prison.

The meeting, on 10 January 1995, lies at the heart of the controversy

over the sacking of Mr Lewis by the then home secretary.

Seven days later Miss MacNaughten presented the official minutes of the proceedings.

But these, according to people who were present at the meeting, are a "sanitised" version of what happened.

On Friday Ms Widdecombe sought to see the contemporaneous notes, but was denied permission, despite the fact that Mr Howard had been allowed to consult the files.

Officials say that Ms Widdecombe does not have an automatic right to see the papers, as they were notes

which were taken by Mr Howard's secretary.

Ms Widdecombe was told that her request would have to be referred to the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office.

She, in turn, gave notice that she expected an answer by this morning. It is believed, however, that she has access to other documents to make her accusation against Mr Howard.

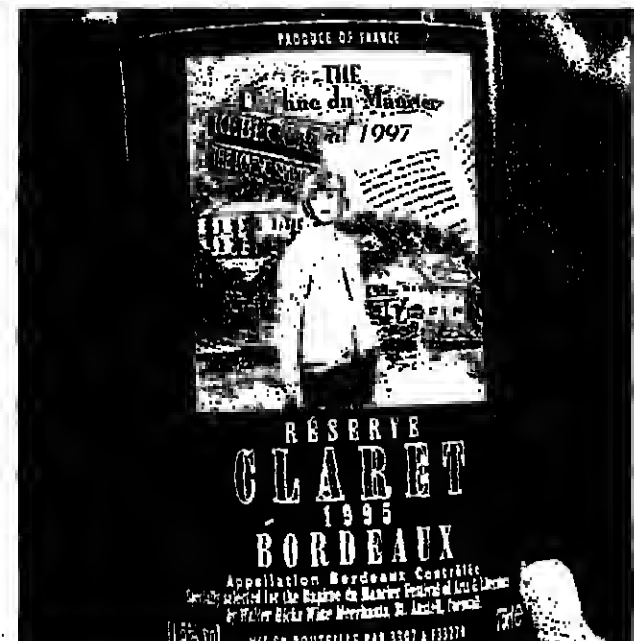
Yesterday Mr Howard said that he was looking forward to answering Ms Widdecombe's "with relish". He rejected charges that he had misled MPs over the dismissal of Mr Lewis. *Tories' virgin soldier*, page 13

She dreamt of going to Manderley again - and 8,000 Rebecca fans had the same idea



Steps back in time: Enthusiasts, desperate for a glimpse of Daphne du Maurier's beloved home, Menabilly, walk along the coastal path near Fowey, led by guide Lynn Gould, before returning to the village in search of the numerous commemorative items on sale, such as the du Maurier claret (right). Above, a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's classic 1940 Hollywood film version of *Rebecca*, starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine.

Photographs: Paul Aminger and Picturegoer



Kathy Marks

They had come along hoping for a glimpse of Menabilly, the rambling country house that Daphne du Maurier immortalised as Manderley in her novel *Rebecca*.

"See those cows in the fields behind me," said Lynn Gould, the guide. "Now look to your right, to the gap in the trees, and you can just make out two red chimneys." The groups of hikers strained their necks and squinted at the horizon. But Menabilly, shrouded by woodland, refused to yield up its secrets.

This was the Rebecca Walk, a ramble around the stretch of Cornish coastline that provided the settings for du Maurier's brooding tale. For fans of the novelist, it was one of the highlights of a 10-day festival celebrating her life and works, centred on Fowey, the ancient port town near St Austell where she spent most of her adult life.

Tourism officials, mindful of the huge appeal of her books, have decided that a decent enough interval has passed since her death eight years ago. The festival, which ended yesterday, was their first stab at exploiting Fowey's literary her-

Cream teas and coastal walks help celebrate the life of a Cornish literary legend

itage and attracted 8,000 visitors, four times the population of the town.

They came from far and wide to retrace du Maurier's steps and immerse themselves in the rugged scenery that inspired her best known works. They watched stage productions of her novels in the town hall, hastily renamed the du Maurier Theatre, and attended an illustrated lecture on the history and cultivation of the camellia, said to be her favourite flower.

Readers with a romantic streak ate cream teas in Wyllow Church in nearby Lanteglos, where she married Major Tommy Browning in 1932, and took boat trips recreating the couple's wedding journey on Browning's yacht, *Ygdasil*, along the coast to Frenman's Creek, where the couple spent their honeymoon. "A dream come true," wrote one tourist in the town's visitors' book.

Those who descended the tortuously narrow streets to

the harbour could gaze across the River Fowey at Feryside, the old boathouse where du Maurier first lived in Cornwall, now the home of her son, Kiti Browning, and his curiously named wife, Hacker. Menabilly, which she leased for many years, is occupied by the Rashleigh family, who have owned it for generations.

At the Information Centre, there were du Maurier bone china mugs on sale, as well as leather bookmarks, pens, sweat-shirts and even bottles of du Maurier claret. Her most ardent fans appear to be middle aged women. "The novels are so racy," said Joan Moore, a South African tourist, buying an armful of them as her husband, Donald, shuffled awkwardly at her side.

On the Rebecca Walk, which included declamations from the novel at strategic points along the windswept Gribbin Headland, two American hikers went into raptures. They had

already taken two other themed walks, based around scenes from *The Loving Spirit* and *The House on the Strand*.

"We came to England two weeks early to catch the festival," said Helen Bray, from Kalamazoo, Michigan, who plans to stop off in Hardy Country on her way to the annual meeting of the Brontë Society in Haworth.

The organisers lured a gaggle of celebrities to Fowey, including the actor Sir John Mills, the crime writers Ruth Rendell and P D James, the poet Pam Ayres and George Melly, the jazz musician. The festival also coincided with an exchange visit by people from Dithmarschen, Fowey's twin town in Germany, who contributed a choir to the entertainment.

Kiti Browning, who has a reputation as a recluse, put the family's stamp of approval on events by opening the festival. Mr Browning, whose production company administers the film, stage and television rights to his mother's works, makes no exaggerated claims about the appeal of her books. "She didn't write fantastic dialogue or have incredibly literary merit," he said. "What she was, in a nutshell, was a great storyteller."

Fast track for tenor from Tuscany

Claire Garner

It has taken just one week for Andrea Bocelli to storm the British charts. The blind Tuscan tenor was a complete unknown when he performed on the National Lottery show last week. Now, after minimal radio airplay, he has gone straight to the Number Two slot.

The single, a romantic Italian duet entitled "Time to Say Goodbye" ("Con Te Partiro") and sung by Bocelli and Sarah Brightman, was originally recorded by Bocelli alone. The story goes that Ms Brightman was so enchanted when she heard the solo version in a restaurant that she asked staff about it. She had been asked to find a song to sing at the retirement night of the German world light-heavyweight champion, Henry Maske, and felt "Con Te Partiro" was perfect.

Having tracked Bocelli down, the song was re-recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra and the pair's performance in the ring in November delighted the crowd. Even Maske wept.



Bocelli: Catapulted to fame by romantic Italian duet

Since then "Con Te Partiro" has become the biggest selling single of all time in Germany, with sales approaching the three million mark. It is still in the top ten in Germany after 10 weeks at Number One and five months in the top three.

Over the last year Andrea has also claimed Number One spots on pop album and single charts in France, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland.

Since being discovered by Luciano Pavarotti in 1992, Bocelli, 38, has taken master classes

with the maestro. He has sung for the Pope, with Pavarotti, Bryan Adams and Bryan Ferry. He was born with a visual defect and, at the age of 12, he lost his sight completely after an accident playing football. Bocelli is adamant that, for him, his blindness was in no way a tragedy. "The tragedy is that people continue to make a fuss out of something which they consider tragic, not I."

In 1992, Bocelli assisted Zucchero, the Italian rock star best known in Britain for his duet with Paul Young, "Senza Una Donna" ("Without a Woman"), on a demo track. Zucchero had written the track with Bono of U2, entitled "Miserere", intended as a duet with Pavarotti.

Zucchero invited Andrea to perform Pavarotti's vocals for a demo designed to convince the maestro to record the duet. When Pavarotti received the demo, he demanded, "Who is this guy? Thank you for writing such a wonderful song. Yet you do not need me to sing it. Let Andrea sing 'Miserere' with you, for there is no one finer."

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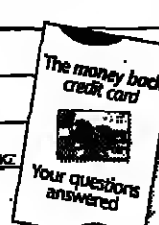
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news

Blair launches war on drug abuse

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

The Government launched a new assault on drug abuse yesterday with the announcement of a heavyweight ministerial committee to tackle the problem.

At the same time the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said the courts would be able to prescribe drug treatment for offenders and that the scheme could be backed by random testing.

The new committee, chaired by the Leader of the Commons, Ann Taylor, will have the task



Straw: Addicts' treatment could include random tests

of appointing a high-profile "drugs tsar" to lead a campaign against abuse and the trade in illegal drugs. It will also include Mr Straw, the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and the Secretary of State for Health Frank Dobson.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said: "I want to breathe new life into the battle against drugs. We will hit hard on drugs and the drugs trade."

Among the candidates tipped for the "drugs tsar" post is the former chief constable of Grampian, Ian Oliver.

Under the Crime and Disorder Bill announced in last week's Queen's Speech, the courts will be given powers to impose a drug treatment and testing order on offenders with a drug problem.

Mr Straw said that the person against whom the order was

made would be forced to undergo a programme of treatment which would include random testing.

"They would be in the community which is cheaper than prison but if it turned out they were not clean, they were carrying on taking their drugs there would be a series of sanctions and they could end up in prison," he said.

"This kind of approach has worked in the United States and we think it will work here."

Mr Straw said that while they could be imposed on people convicted of drugs offences they would be more typically used against burglars and robbers with a drug problem.

"The first thing is to really establish in the public's mind, particularly young people's minds, this profound link between drugs and crime," he said. "The police know that. They will say that almost all the serial burglars they pick up have got a very serious drugs problem."

Mrs Taylor said that over the next few months she would be taking a thorough look at current anti-drugs initiatives, particularly efforts to educate young people not to take them.

"Tackling drugs misuse is a priority for this Government. It is one of the biggest challenges we face," she said.

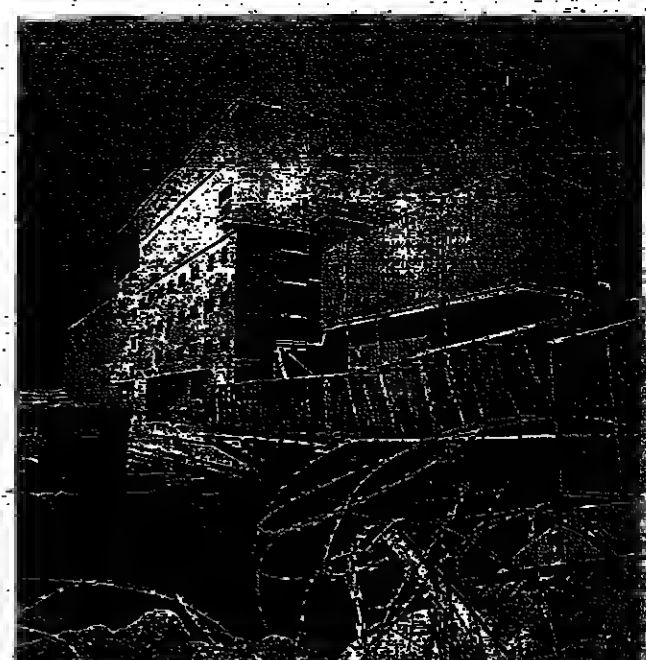
"Drugs wreck lives and damage communities and can corrupt the energy and vitality of our young."

Paul Cavadino, chairman of the Penal Affairs Consortium, welcomed the measures but said they would only work if resources were available for more treatment facilities.

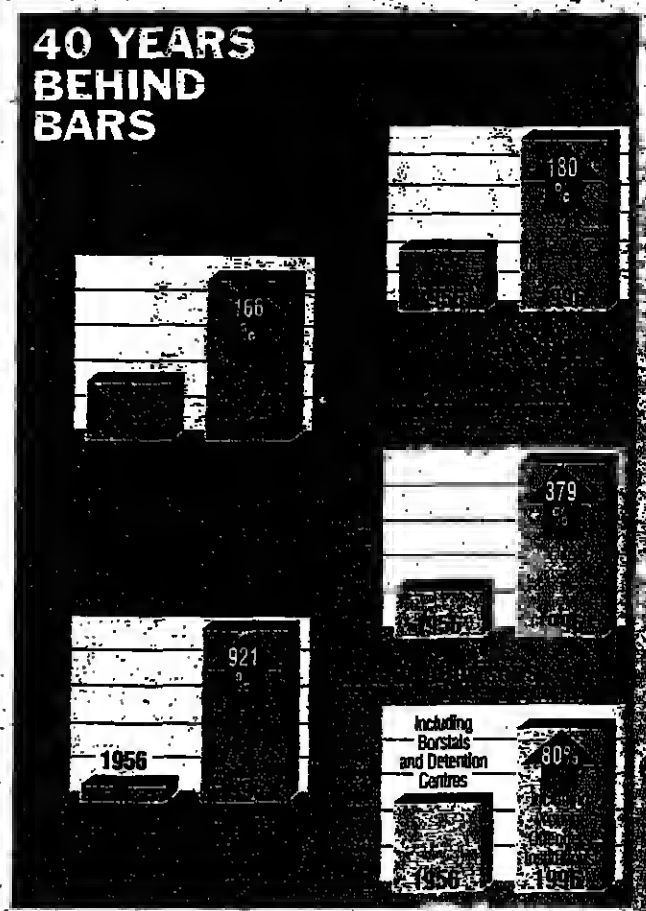
"Research in America shows that for every dollar invested in drug treatment, the taxpayer saves \$7 during treatment and a 12-month period afterwards."

The move came as a Home Office study concluded that one in five people arrested in the UK were heroin users.

If the findings of a 21-month survey of urine samples taken from people who had been arrested are correct, they would mean that 360,000 of the 1.8 million people arrested each year were using the drug. Because it stays in the blood for less than 48 hours, the true figure could be even higher.



Then and now: The 1956 film *Yield to the Night* starring Diana Dors as Ruth Ellis, the last woman hanged in Britain. Forty years later, the prison built to British waters. Photographs: Roland Grant Archive/John



How mass culture has turned Britain into a nation of criminals

Ian Burrell

Mass culture is transforming Britain into a nation of criminals. New research to be published this week will demonstrate how far the trapings of modern living have accelerated the criminalisation of society.

The response of successive governments to the arrival of the motor car, the computer, the television set and synthetic drugs has been to create hundreds of new offences punishable by jail.

As a result the prison visit, once an activity associated only with a criminal underclass, features in the lives of hundreds of thousands each year.

Research produced by the New Bridge charity, passed to *The Independent*, shows the staggering transformation of the prison system in the 40 years since the charity was set up.

Despite a rise in the general population of only 16 per cent, the number of prisoners has gone up by 180 per cent from just over 20,000 to nearly 60,000 at the end of last year. In the same period, the number of prisoners has increased by 80 per cent, from 75 to 135.

The number of women prisoners has increased by 166 per cent, from 833 to 2,300, while

the annual cost of keeping a prisoner of either sex has gone up from £500 (£6,385 in real terms) in 1956 to £24,200, 40 years later—an increase of 379 per cent.

The number of inmates held for violent or sexual offences has remained almost constant at only 15 per cent of the total prison population throughout the 40-year period.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "Since 1956, more and more activities have been criminalised and more and more offences have been created. The net has been widened

and widened." One in three British males now has a criminal record by the time he is 30.

The year 1956 has been cited as the year when modern pop culture was born, and in the last four decades a succession of new legislation has been brought in, including laws covering raves, drugs misuse, illegal immigration and owning a dangerous dog.

Many new offences punishable by jail have come in with the arrival of the motor car. There are now 21 categories of driving offence. And nearly 1,000 people are jailed each year for failure to pay fines for not having a licence for their

television set. The number of offences punishable by prison is not likely to be reduced by the new Labour government.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, is planning to make it a custodial offence to be a noisy neighbour or "breaching the new parental training orders. He has, however, signalled his intention to stop the jailing of fine defaulters.

In the New Bridge charity's annual report, with which the study will be released on Thursday, it states its belief that the 40-year figures demonstrate a marked change in attitude among the British public.

Despite the assertion of

Michael Howard, the last home secretary, that "prison works", the New Bridge report cites figures which show that the number of prisoners reconvicted within two years has increased by 159 per cent since 1956.

Eric McGraw, the director of New Bridge, which helps to rehabilitate prisoners into society, said that the reconviction rate was a damning indictment of the effectiveness of prison.

"If it was the National Health Service and 50 per cent of people were coming out worse than they went in, you would close the hospital," he said. "But for some reason we tolerate it when it comes to prisons."

Sinn Fein pair prepare for blackballing by Commons

David McKittrick
Belfast
and Mary Dejevsky
Washington

Sinn Fein's new MPs, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, will today present themselves at Westminster as Irish equivalents of Black Rod, ceremonially demanding entrance in the certain knowledge that they will be turned away.

The Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, has already decreed that the pair should not be given access to any of the facilities of Parliament on the grounds that they will not take the oath of allegiance to the Queen.

The two men, who are MPs for West Belfast and Mid-Ulster, are expected to be allowed into the building, but then they will formally refuse to take the oath. What happens next depends on the arcane intricacies of parliamentary procedure.

However, Ms Boothroyd's ruling will not come into force until after the Queen's Speech debate ends on Tuesday.

Although Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness could be fined £500 and barred if they try to sit in the Commons, speak or vote without taking the oath, they are still entitled to look around.

At the weekend Mr Adams denounced the Speaker's edict as "insulting and discriminatory", and did not rule out the possibility of legal action. He declared: "Once again the British are not ruling the waves but waiving the rules."

A large majority of MPs in all parties strongly support the decision to exclude the pair, and much of the media will view today's exercise as empty propaganda. But it will play better outside Britain, since sections of Irish and American opinion may be more sympathetic to the argument that the republican mandate should be recognised.

While this encounter may capture headlines, much work is going on behind the scenes for the meeting between Sinn Fein and officials which was sanctioned by Tony Blair last week.

Officials telephoned Sinn Fein on Saturday to begin making arrangements for the meeting, which may take place this week. Also on Saturday Sinn Fein held its first meeting for months with Irish officials. The pace is therefore quickening as the governments seek a second IRA ceasefire.

Martin McGuinness said yesterday: "What we have to do is establish ... whether or not we are going to have on offer a real

and meaningful and credible process of peace negotiations, and if we can establish that then we might have a case to put persuasively to the IRA. We will be in a position at that stage ... to put that to the IRA. Whether or not the IRA will accept that is another matter altogether."

Baroness Thatcher yesterday attacked Tony Blair's decision to reopen talks without conditions. In her first real criticism of Mr Blair, she said: "I do not like it ... You do not fail to people who support violence without getting an undertaking from them that that violence will cease."

Speaking in Phoenix, Arizona, she said: "The people in Northern Ireland vote ... to stay with Britain. The IRA try to terrorise them out of that decision. They must never succeed."

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politics

Govan's millionaire knight fights for his political life

Ian Burrell

Like a knight in shining armour, Mohammed Sarwar came home to Glasgow last year as the rescuer of two young Scots damsels in distress overseas.

Mr Sarwar's personal mission to "save" Nazia and Rifat Haq from forced marriages in Pakistan was a wonderful photo opportunity for an aspiring politician. The millionaire businessman turned to face the press and warned: "This atrocious abuse of women is intolerable." His actions cast him as a hero in a tale which appeared to embody the cultural conflict experienced by the 20,000-strong Pakistani community in Glasgow.

At the time of the rescue, in April 1996, Mr Sarwar had been embroiled in a bitter fight for the Labour candidacy for the seat of Glasgow Govan. He had been beaten by one vote by Mike Watson, a sitting Labour MP, the previous December, but protested that the selection process was unfair.

In May, weeks after the forced marriage affair hit the headlines, the Labour party national executive committee ordered a re-run and Mr Sarwar won the candidacy. It was said that Labour chiefs were worried about losing the Asian vote in Scotland. Yet while Mr Sarwar had im-

pressed Labour bosses with his liberal views, his position as a community leader was far from secure.

His Pakistan rescue was denounced by some as a "disgrace to Islam". Among the critics was Badar Islam, another prominent Glasgow Pakistani, who thought Mr Sarwar's actions had brought "shame" on the Asian community. Mr Sarwar's response was illuminating. "I know I have my enemies and they will use anything they can to try and attack me," he said.

Anyone turning a humble corner-shop enterprise into an £85m cash-and-carry empire, as Mr Sarwar did after arriving in Scotland from Pakistan 20 years ago, is likely to pick up their share of antagonists. But Mr Sarwar had manoeuvred himself into a position where he was fighting his first election with bitter adversaries within his own constituency party, and in his community.

The rescue trip, which had propelled him into the public eye, was also the cause of many of his problems. Abdul Haq, the father of the two rescued girls, announced that he was suing for £1m damages over Mr Sarwar's allegations about his part in the forced marriages.

As campaigning began in Govan, the cash-and-carry boss found himself confronted by a crop of "Stop Sarwar" candidates, trying to whip up the kind

of protest vote normally reserved for celebrity MPs like David Mellor.

Two friends of Mr Haq's announced that they were standing. Zahid Abbasi, a fellow Muslim, was an Independent Conservative, while Peter Paton was running on an Unofficial Labour ticket. Even more confusingly, Mr Islam, who took a dim view of Mr Sarwar's rescue, now stood against him as an Independent Labour candidate.

The campaign, like the Labour selection, quickly became acrimonious. Days before the election, Mr Paton went to Strathclyde police with allegations of vote-rigging after 279 voters gained late entry to the electoral roll. The police are still investigating, but Mr Sarwar argues that there is nothing wrong with encouraging people to exercise their right to vote.

On 1 May, despite intense competition from the Scottish Nationalist Party, Mr Sarwar was elected, by a margin of 2,914, as Britain's first Muslim MP. Before polling day, Mr Sarwar claimed that his enemies were offering up to £250,000 for information that would sully his honour.

And, last night, after Mr Islam's dramatic allegations of corruption, this outspoken champion of decency was doing his best to persuade Labour chiefs that he himself had not paid thousands of pounds in bribes.



Culture club: Mohammed Sarwar sitting between Nazia Haq (left), Rifat with their mother Fatima and sister Somera



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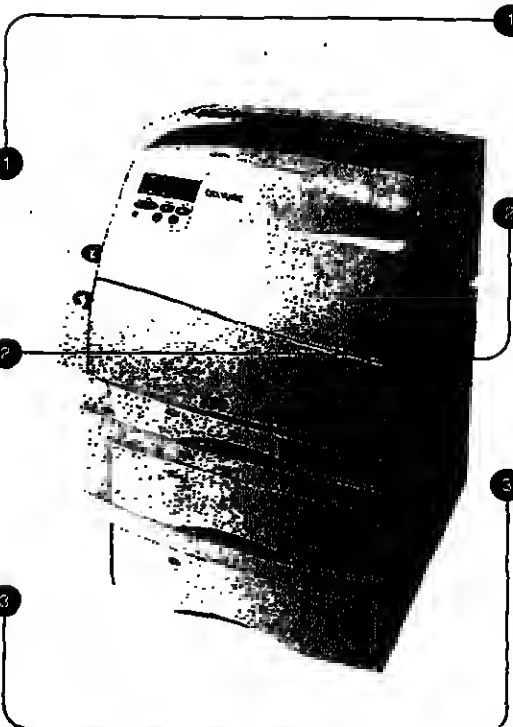
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EU tells Britain: speed up work law

Sarah Helm
Brussels

Britain's honeymoon with Europe could be undermined by a dispute over how fast the Government should implement workers-rights laws under the social chapter.

The European Commission is pushing for a fast-track procedure for ratifying the social chapter by the end of the year, which the Government is determined to resist.

The Government's decision to sign up to the social chapter was widely viewed in Brussels as evidence that the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is sincere in his determination to make a fresh start in relations with Europe.

However, pledging to sign up to the measures must be matched by action to implement them, senior European Commission officials say. To reverse the opt out in the Maastricht treaty, won by John Major, Mr Blair must ratify the protocol by translating it speedily into British law.

Any delay in implementation is likely to be interpreted within the commission, and some member states, as a sign that Britain's new government - like its predecessors - still harbours doubts about a "social Europe".

British officials are monitoring proposals, which are being discussed under the social protocol, and there are signs of a desire by the new government to keep a brake on attempts by the commission to introduce further measures.

So far only two proposals have been implemented under the protocol, which is intended to protect the rights of workers in a free market economy, and consists of proposals first agreed by unions and employers.

One measure so far agreed sets up works councils in multinational companies and the second grants rights to parental leave after the birth of a child.

Further measures being discussed this year include plans to give part-time workers greater rights; plans to end sex discrimination and sexual harassment at work; and a proposal

to extend worker participation in company decisions.

Under separate health and safety articles of the treaty, the commission is expected to publish a White Paper next month extending the 48-hour maximum working week to workers in fields such as transport, and to junior doctors.

Padraig Flynn, the Social Affairs Commissioner, insists he has no new "raft of measures" on social legislation.

Once the single currency is operating, however, the commissioner does believe there will be greater need for Europe-wide minimum standards of workers' rights, and coordination of social security.

Reversing Britain's opt out is proving to be a legal headache.

It has been expected that Britain would simply "opt in" when the social protocol is written into the Amsterdam treaty next month, which Britain will sign. This is the approach favoured by the Government.

However, the new treaty must also be ratified by each member state - a process which could take up to two years.

This would mean Britain sitting on the sidelines as far as the social protocol is concerned for some long time to come, said one commission official.

In January, Britain takes over the EU presidency. The commission is voicing fears that if the Government has not been able to participate in the social chapter by then, it will be unable to join decision-making on such issues under its own presidency.

The commission is therefore suggesting that the ratification of the social chapter would be carried out separately from ratification of the full treaty. This fast-track procedure could be completed by December.

British officials argue that Mr Flynn's attempt to force the pace of implementation is unacceptable and would dog the parliamentary timetable.

The Government is understood to be looking for a political agreement, which would allow it to participate in talks on social legislation, ahead of parliamentary ratification.

DAILY POEM

My Sister wants a Muff

By Selima Hill

My sister wants a muff,
a Persian cat,
a peach, a pool,
a white jardiniere;
she wants a little car
to run around in,
a moon, a guy, a lover, HRT,
but most of all she wants my late father -
the way a chandelier would want a cosh:
to smash itself to bits with love at night
when everybody else is making love
at lots of deeply satisfying angles.

This poem comes from Selima Hill's new collection, *Floater* (Bloodaxe Books, £5.95). A fantastic double portrait of family life, it consists of two sequences, "My Sister's Sister" (which appeared last year as a separate pamphlet) and "My Husband's Wife".

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Students laid back about jobs

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

University students are turning their backs on the recruitment "milk round" and putting off the search for a career, despite a sharp rise in highly-paid graduate jobs.

The third annual graduate careers survey, published today, reveals students are increasingly delaying decisions on life after graduation until after final exams, with fewer than half making any job applications at all while still at university.

The research, based on in-

terviews with more than 12,000 students in Britain's "old" universities – the traditional hunting ground of companies seeking promising trainees – suggests major graduate employers may be missing out on talented candidates by trying to recruit before finals.

Only one in four students expected to start a graduate job after leaving the university, while the rest resisted the lure of the "milk round" – the annual recruitment tour of campuses by graduate employers including Ford, ICI, Unilever and Esso.

A fifth were planning post-

graduate study, over a quarter thought they would travel or had no definite plans, and one in ten expected to take work other than a graduate job.

The relaxed attitude to job-hunting among the class of '97 comes despite a 12 per cent increase in graduate posts this year, according to predictions made by employers in January.

Though the message had got through to students that the graduate job market was booming again after a period of decline, they were still staying away, said Martin Birchall, director of the survey. "They feel

that if there are more jobs available, there is no urgency to apply, and they might as well enjoy their final year."

But that does not take into account employers who may want to recruit in the spring and may miss some of the brightest students.

Undergraduates' laid-back attitude to employment reflected a lack of emphasis placed on work preparation by old universities, he suggested. "Career planning and job hunting is just not a significant priority for universities. Right from the very first week students

are told they should focus on their academic studies, yet there are really very few people encouraging them to decide what they want to do afterwards."

Surveys of employers have shown a strong academic record is only one of a range of requirements in choosing a graduate trainee. Companies also seek significant work experience, evidence of an active student life and a sense of direction, and determination to pursue a chosen career.

The graduate careers survey reveals that top universities, where many courses incorporate

work placements – including Bath, Aston, Loughborough and Imperial College, London – are most likely to produce students heading for graduate jobs.

The research also shows the most popular graduate careers areas were engineering, accountancy and marketing, while purchasing and actuarial work were bottom of the pile.

Students had relatively modest expectations of their starting salary, averaging £14,400, but were predicting a dramatic earnings increase to £26,300 within five years – an increase of 16 per cent every year.

Hammer poised on life of the courtesan queen

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

The ghost of Pamela Harriman, coiffured and with her broadest hostess's smile, will be presiding at Sotheby's in New York tonight as the paintings, furniture and memorabilia she collected on a climb from courtesan to United States ambassador go under the auctioneer's hammer.

Ambassador Harriman died in February, aged 76, after suffering a stroke during her daily workout at the Paris Ritz. The style and location were entirely appropriate, but eyebrows have been raised since over the haste of her heirs to sell off her effects.

The auction over three days will consist of 1,150 lots of paintings, furniture, decorations, books, wine and Churchill memorabilia from her homes in Paris, Washington and Middleburg, Virginia. The last two residences are to be auctioned too.

The beneficiaries will be the former Tory MP Winston Churchill, Mrs Harriman's only son, and his estranged wife, Minnie. Sotheby's estimate the auction excluding the two properties – will realise some £3.5m.

Mr Churchill scooped £12m when National Lottery money was used to buy his grandfather's wartime papers for the nation. However, the 1994 separation from Minnie cost him a reported £5m and he faces massive tax bills. Mrs Harriman left her most valuable possession, a Van Gogh worth £50m, to an art gallery.

The life of Pamela Harriman, daughter of the 11th Lord Digby and thrice married – first to Randolph Churchill and last, and most successfully, to the Democrat diplomat Averell Harriman – was the stuff of novels.

Diana Brooks, President of Sotheby's Holdings, talks of Mrs Harriman's "refined taste and flair" and says the collection, filling almost 500 pages of a £60 catalogue, offers "a fascinating glimpse into the life of one of the most accomplished women of our era".

Press descriptions have been more candid. In post-war Paris she had a succession of lovers, including Gianni Agnelli, heir to the Fiat empire, and Baro Elie de Rothschild. She was dubbed "the world's expert on rich men's ceilings". But her return to the French



Pamela Harriman's effects – "a glimpse into one of the most accomplished women of our era" – may raise £3.5m

Photomontage: Mark Hayman

capital as ambassador in 1952, after years as a Democrat fund raiser, was a golden final chapter, marred only by financial squabbles with her relatives.

Highlights among the works to be auctioned are 19th- and 20th-century paintings and drawings by George Seurat, John Singer Sargent, Paul

Cesar Helleu and Andre Derain. Sargent's *Sailor in Capri*, an oil on canvas painted in 1878, is expected to fetch more than £600,000.

For non-art collectors, the main items of interest will be the Kennedy and Churchill memorabilia, including an old rocking chair said to have been given to Averell

Harriman by President Kennedy and the fountain pen used by Kennedy to ratify the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963.

Sir Winston, Mrs Harriman's father-in-law, is featured in bronze – a portrait head by Oscar Nemon (estimated £3,600) – in photographs, and in a charcoal

drawing, *Playing Cards*, by Paul Maze (up to £2,800).

There is also a cheque signed by Churchill for £5/5s in favour of Averell Harriman accompanied by a letter from Churchill's personal secretary. The Prime Minister and Mr Harriman, then US ambassador to Britain, used the card game bezique to

relax in wartime. As the letter explains: "Mr Churchill asks me to send you the enclosed cheque for £53.0. in settlement of his bezique debt, with many apologies for the delay." The great man's grandson and namesake is depending on a rather large cheque at the close of proceedings in New York.

Pledge to break the aid link to arms

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Clare Short, Britain's new Cabinet Minister for International Development, has ordered a full-scale review of aid spending to ensure that a scandal like the Pergau Dam affair, where cash aid to Malaysia was linked to arms sales, could never happen again.

Ms Short is determined to ensure that her department's budget should be directed at alleviating poverty and providing basic health care and education.

Officials at the new Department of International Development are already working on a White Paper, to be published later this year, showing how the £2bn aid budget can be better spent.

Ms Short said this weekend that she believed that abject poverty could be eliminated from the world within 25 years if rich nations worked together towards that end.

"Aid needs to go into programmes of human development for the poorest people in the world. The most developmental thing you can do is to educate girls," she said.

Existing projects would continue, she said, but as they came up for renewal they would be reviewed to ensure they met the aims of the new department. Her first major project, announced last week, involved £7.5m for education in South Africa.

The White Paper would set out the principles of the department and break with the old orthodoxy that progress was inevitable if rich countries con-

tinued to give small sums of aid to poor countries, she said.

Ms Short said that with an already crowded legislative programme set out last week by the Labour government, she believed she could meet her aims without legislation. She argued that existing rules could be used to prevent arms from being sold in return for overseas aid.

She said that she supported the provisions in a private members Bill, introduced earlier this year by Hugh Bayley, Labour MP for York, but that they could be implemented without legislation. Mr Bayley argued that the use of the aid budget for any project which breached social, environmental or human rights standards or which were linked to the sale of military equipment should be banned.

A trip to the doctor can make you sick

Jeremy Lawrence
Health Editor

The way in which doctors talk to their patients can affect the course of their illness and in some cases determine its outcome, a new report says.

Insensitive or inept giving of bad news, such as a diagnosis of cancer, can have profound effects. One in five patients in cancer units develop full-blown psychiatric disorders and the main cause is the way in which bad news is broken, according to the report by the Royal College of Physicians.

The failure of doctors to offer sympathy or an explanation when things go wrong, mistaking this for an apology, is the main cause of complaints. In 90 per cent of cases dealt with by one of the medical defence or-

ganisations, failure of communication was a major reason for the complaint.

The report, *Improving Communication between Doctors and Patients*, offers tips to doctors on how to conduct themselves and calls for better training for them. Bad news will be different for each patient, it says, and can be defined as information which drastically alters their view of their future.

"A pulled hamstring for most people would be painful and inconvenient, but it is a disaster for an Olympic runner on the eve of a big race," the report says.

It advises doctors not to talk down to patients ("sit on the same level" – this is reassuring and courteous and signifies that you are "with them"), not to talk too much ("spend the first part

of the interviewing listening") and to express their "humanity and warmth".

With complainants, it says that feelings of "regretful sympathy" should be expressed even where a complaint may be unjustified. "A doctor who says that he or she is sorry that a patient has suffered is not admitting liability and should not fear possible litigation in simply expressing sympathy and regret."

Professor Sir Leslie Thurnberg, president of the college and chairman of the working party that produced the report, said: "Poor communication is a very important cause of dissatisfaction among patients and this may impair the effectiveness of any treatment proposed. This report points to ways in which doctors can improve those skills."

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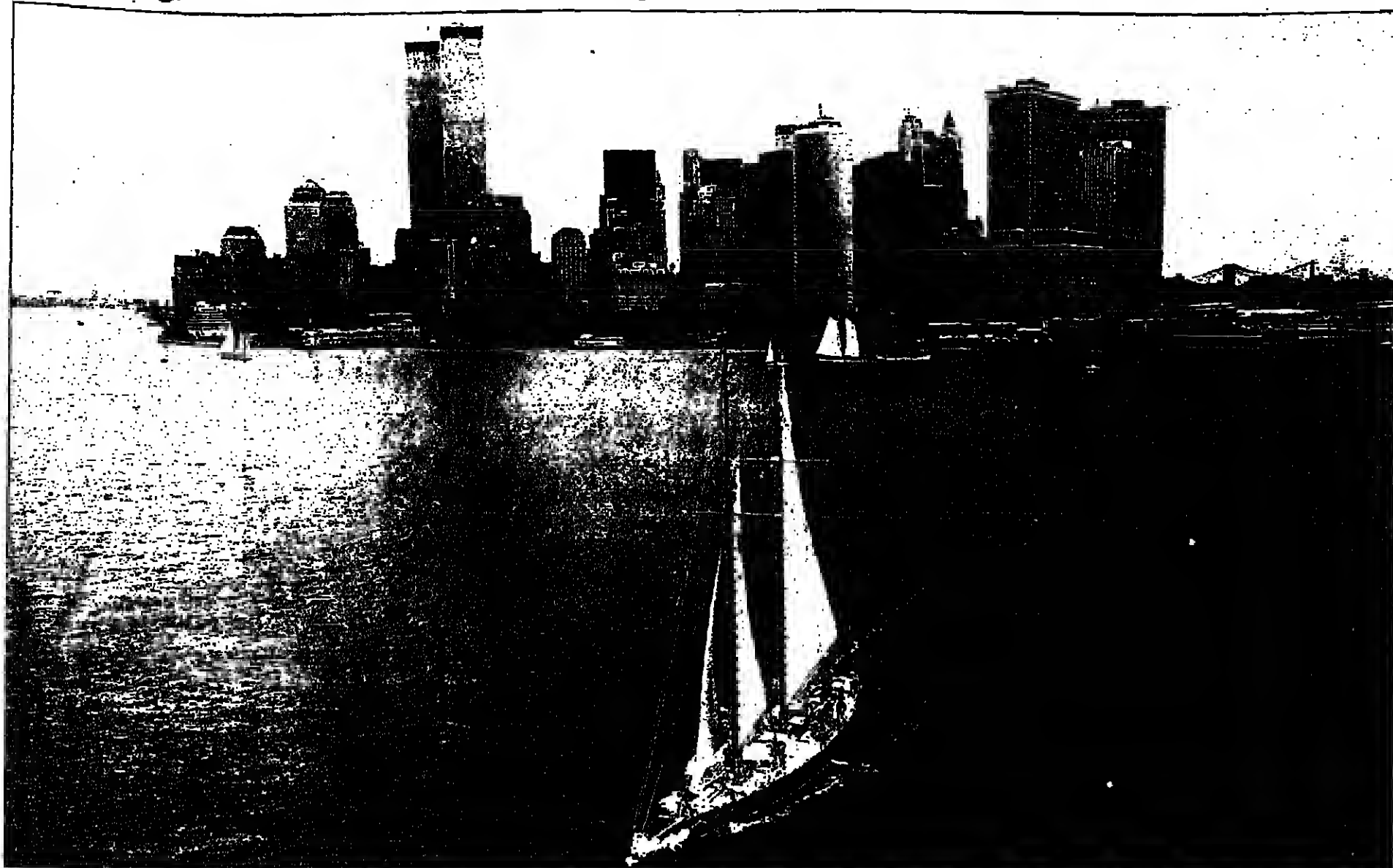
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So long, Manhattan ... transatlantic yachtsmen set sail in search of new horizons



The Mariette heads to Sandy Hook, Long Island, at the weekend to join a fleet of super-yachts for the start of the Atlantic Challenge Cup, which is presented by Rolex. Participants are expected to cross the Atlantic by the end of the month, to finish in Falmouth, Devon. Photograph: Kos

Turkish forces show no mercy to rebel Kurds

Andrew Marshall
and agencies

Turkey continued with its massive military onslaught against rebel Kurds yesterday, despite heavy criticism from abroad.

The Turkish foreign ministry said its troops would not leave until the rebels were "rendered inefficient", and heavy fighting continued. But Turkey's Foreign Minister, Tansu Ciller, was reported by the main Turkish news agency as saying she wanted the operation to be finished as soon as possible.

Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, urged Turkey to pull out its troops at a news conference in Moscow on Saturday.

"As Secretary-General of the United Nations I cannot condone any transgression of the territorial integrity of any country, and I would encourage the Turkish army to withdraw as soon as possible," he said.

And in Baghdad, Iraq's United Nations co-ordinator said the operation would destabilise the region and might block implementation of Iraq's oil-for-food deal with the UN.

"We are concerned about this development since it may produce an even more volatile security situation in the north, the UN co-ordinator Staffan de Mistura said.

The British-based Mines Advisory Group said it was pulling out of Dohuk, in northern Iraq, because of security concerns.

The European Union, in a statement issued by the Dutch presidency, also called on Turkey to pull out.

Britain and France have both criticised the operation, and

the attitude of the United States has been lukewarm.

Yesterday, the fifth day of the incursion, F-16 jets bombed rebel positions in the northern Iraqi mountains, while a column of Turkish tanks moved north-east along the road from Dohuk to Amadiya.

The Turkish military says that it has killed 902 guerrillas so far, for the loss of 12 of its own soldiers.

The Turkish government says that the operation was launched in response to a call from an Iraqi Kurdish group, Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), has been generally in charge of the border areas of northern Iraq, while a rival Kurdish group has control further south.

"The operation will continue until the terrorist groups in the area are rendered ineffective and the area is controlled by Barzani's forces," a Turkish official said yesterday.

KDP forces have been seen working with Turkish forces. A spokesman for the anti-Baghdad Iraqi National Congress said that contacts inside the town of Arbil reported a gun battle there between members of the PKK and KDP late on Friday. Kurdish sources dispute the Turkish government's casualty count, but media access to the region has been curtailed and there is no way of verifying the figures.

Yesterday the German-based DEM news agency carried a call to arms from the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.

"I call once more to all our people to fight," DEM quoted Mr Ocalan as telling a Kurdish television channel.



What makes Russia see red?

MOSCOW DAYS

A day or two ago, a Russian neighbour and friend, arrived at the door. He wanted us to look after his dog while he was away on a trip. Would we mind?

I have known him for more than a year. I have walked with him, talked with him, dined with him, all of which has been conducted under one common understanding: that his dog was called Richard.

Russians do not generally name their pets using their own names - Alexander, Boris, Olga - but they have no compunction about summoning an animal to heel by bellowing out the name of an English king. Now, out of the blue, my friend revealed a secret. The dog has two names; he also called him "Tolik", a short form of the name "Anatoly". The conceit was simple: the dog, a setter, has red hair; so too does the first deputy prime minister of the Russian Federation, the second most senior man in the government, the economic brain-box beloved of the West, Anatoly Borisovich Chubais.

Red hair arouses peculiar sentiments in Russia; at best, there is a vague tendency to single out redheaded people; at worst, there is blind and bloody-minded prejudice. Mr Chubais is widely disliked here because he masterminded a vast privatisation programme in which millions of Russians were issued with vouchers, only to find them worthless. Ever since, he has been blamed for selling off the equivalent of the family silver. But he is also scorned, for reasons far harder to fathom, because of what happens to grow on his head. Even Mr Gorbachev, with his famous birthmark, did not suffer thus.

You rarely hear a Russian slapping off Mr Chubais without first appending to his name the word "ryzhii" - redhead. "You know what that stupid redhead Chubais has done now?" Thus begin a thousand conversations every day from St Petersburg to Vladivostok. This is not only malicious, it is also inaccurate. Mr Chubais is more flaxen than red, and has none of the ivory pallor and bright hue of a genuine redhead, or even the rusty tints of our new Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. (Alas, I fear he will find the Russian man on the street is way of him).

Strains of this prejudice can be found everywhere (personally, I blame it for Neil Kinnock's 1992 election defeat). But its most virulent form grows on Russian soil. I became aware of it months ago, when I happened on a Russian language text-book for English students. Readers were encouraged to follow the exploits of a hapless and irritating boy called Jimmy the Carrot. It was never spelled out, but the assumption was that being annoying was part of his nature, an inevitable side effect of redheadedness.

Rooted somewhere in the Slavic psyche is the notion that redheads are cunning, dangerous, and too clever by half.

There is an old Russian rhyme "ryzhi krasi chelovek opasni" - "a redheaded person is dangerous". If you miss out someone while handing round, say, chocolates to a group of Russians, they are liable to cry: "Chut' ya, Ryzhi. Chut' li?" What am I, a redhead or something?

The other day, by way of an experiment, I decided to ask every Russian I met why this prejudice prevails. "It goes back centuries," explained Irina, my Russian teacher. "Russians are usually fair or dark. If there was a redhead in the village, and something terrible happened, he or she would always be blamed. It's like - well, a tradition, but it lives on. Today if there is a redhead in a classroom of children, he will definitely get teased. Without doubt."

I tried Olga, a colleague: "It is just because they are rare," she replies. However, she ventured, she did recall seeing shows when she was a child with traditional Russian dolls. One of the characters was always a redhead and spoke with a ridiculously high voice. Keen to help, Olga called Professor Natalia Burnikova, of the Institute of Russian Language. "It's a cultural tradition... such people are thought to be a bit special, more delicate than everyone else, so children tend to tease them," said the professor.

Then I tried one of the

women who watches over our apartment building. "Red hair has got nothing to do with anything, and, by the way, it is not the reason why we hate Chubais. He robbed the people, and gave away our wealth to strangers. Now all the shops around here are not run by Russians, but by people from the east."

She placed her fingers at the corners of her eyes, pulling them into two tight slits. Some subjects are better left alone.

Phil Reeves

The Air Force stands to gain far more: it will avoid having its policies and practices subjected to long and contentious public scrutiny. For if one case exemplified the confused intersection of military discipline and sexual politics in the United States today, this was it.

Ms Flinn's version is briefly this. After Air Force Academy and bomber-training school, she realised her ambition to become a B-52 pilot. Stationed in the freezing, windswept wilds of North Dakota near the Canadian border, she was starved of company. She felt out of place at the officers' club and unwelcome at the wives' club, but she knew the rules.

Men junior or senior to her

Mary Dejevsky
Washington

Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, the first woman in the United States to fly a B-52 bomber for a living, has decided to seek an honourable discharge from the Air Force rather than face a court martial for adultery.

Her lawyer said she had made the decision to save herself, and the Air Force, further embarrassment.

The case had been due to open at Minot Air Base, North Dakota, tomorrow.

Ms Flinn, whose predicament has rarely been out of the headlines in the past week, became something of a star two years ago when she qualified as the first woman bomber pilot in the US Air Force.

At the end of last year, however, at the age of 26, she was grounded, pending court martial for a catalogue of crimes which included adultery.

If the case was embarrassing for Ms Flinn, whose chequered love-life was picked over by even the most upmarket American newspapers, it was doubly so for the military, as some of its top brass candidly admitted. Their star pupil was in disgrace; upwards of \$1m of training had apparently gone to waste.

Now, only a few days after the Air Force denied a report that it was discreetly suing for peace, a deal appears to have been done. If convicted as charged, Ms Flinn would have faced prison, a dishonourable discharge, and a ban on flying in military or civilian life. An honourable discharge would enable her to take a commercial pilot's job.

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Men junior or senior to her

in her own command were off-limits. She declined to date colleagues of equal rank, regarding it as unprofessional. She had a brief fling with an officer in another command. But last year, she fell in love - innocently, she maintains, but unwisely - with a civilian sports coach who told her - falsely - that he was separated.

The relationship went wrong. She discovered his lie; he drank and turned violent. Ms Flinn's superior officer learnt of the affair and ordered her to end it. She obeyed, then disobeyed when her lover attempted suicide. Then she lied to cover up a train of events in which one "mistake", as she calls it, triggered a succession of military crimes. Opinion in the civilian world was generally kind to Ms Flinn; but the military - and

“If one case exemplified the intersection of discipline and sexual politics, this was it”

the Air Force in particular - was fiercely divided. Hardliners maintained that anyone who lies to a superior officer, whatever the circumstances, has no place flying bombers, serving in the Air Force, or in the US forces at all.

Others, however, regarded the court martial as absurd over-reaction, if not sexual discrimination. Ms Flinn, they said, did nothing that countless male officers had got away with, and nothing that some timely advice or at most a reprimand might not have solved. They pointed out that neither of Ms Flinn's admitted liaisons breached fraternisation rules, and that she became aware too late that the second affair was adulterous. This more charitable view, however, comes up against the unimpeachable fact that the law on adultery in the military was enacted not by the forces but by the US Congress. So, if the rules are to change, this is a matter for Congress.

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Cook signals new US era

Rupert Cornwell

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, is in Washington today on a whirlwind visit which should mark the start of a happier era of Anglo-American relations, between the Clinton Administration and the new Labour government.

The style has already been set, with the President's decision to add a London leg to next week's trip to Europe for the Nato/Russia summit - and thus send a signal of Washington's desire to turn the page after its difficulties with the previous Tory government under John Major.

Though relations improved later, they were soured by the help the Conservatives gave George Bush during the 1992 campaign, London's fury over the US visa granted to the Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams, in

1994, and widespread resentment in Washington at what was seen as Britain's refusal to get tough with the Bosnian Serbs.

Not only is the Blair government free of all such baggage, it has also given itself added credibility by a more constructive approach to Europe. As Mr Cook himself put it last week: "Britain will be of more value as an ally to the US if it emerges as a strong force in Europe."

All these factors will be working to Mr Cook's advantage in his visit, shoehorned into an exceptionally tight schedule for an incoming Foreign Secretary. Having arrived in America last night, he leaves this evening for Amsterdam and a special session of EU foreign ministers to prepare Friday's informal inter-governmental Conference summit in Holland.

Top of the agenda today will

be Nato enlargement, and the forthcoming handover in Hong Kong. Britain's immediate aim is to ensure the US keeps a close eye on China's behaviour once it has taken power in the former colony - not a difficult task given the Sino-phobic mood in Washington. In keeping with the new "ethical dimension" of foreign policy, Mr Cook may also sound out the Administration on sanctions against countries like Indonesia and Nigeria with dubious human rights records.

Mr Cook will hold separate talks with his opposite number, Madeleine Albright, the Defense Secretary William Cohen, Sandy Berger, the President's national security adviser, and Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. A session with Mr Clinton himself would be an unlikely, and unexpected, bonus.

international

Mobutu's men face their fate as boy

In the shadow of Kinshasa's deserted parliament a soldier, whose loyalty to Mobutu Sese Seko lasted longer than most, was lying in the sun, blood oozing from his nose.

The jubilant crowd milled around him. No one knew how he had come to die. But after 32 years of Mobutu the soldier had to be seen by everyone, almost as proof that the dictator he served was finally vanquished.

Someone had placed the soldier's arms, rather angelically, across his chest. But others mocked him. A fat woman swung her bottom in his face, to laughter from the crowd.

At the local hospital, built by the ousted president in memory of his mother - but left to crumble, like everything else in Zaire - they were pulling down Mobutu's statue. And on the main boulevard in town a small group was fashioning a tombstone featuring Mobutu's face.

Yesterday, as Laurent Kabila's rebel army swelled into Kinshasa to secure the city, the new Congo-Zaire was in party mood; but the edge was there for those at home and abroad who had supported tyranny. "If you were French," said a smiling reveler. "We would cut you up."

All over town the game was rebel-spotting. At the city's radio station, now in rebel hands, hundreds stood straining to see through the iron bars.

"Verité, verité," they screamed, as a local DJ walked through the gates for a meeting with his new masters.

A local evangelist was just as triumphant. "Jesus is king," he said, thrusting a placard bearing the message. "Show that to Mobutu." Every rebel who entered the camp was cheered. Then came Willie Makongo and his brother Galenga, until Saturday a major in Mr Mobutu's army. Mr Mobutu's elite presidential guard fled from the city with their weapons but the vast majority of the country's demoralised and disillusioned troops stayed put.

Mr Galenga raised his AK47, declaring he had come to turn himself and his weapon in. The crowd cheered. "If they band in



MARY BRAID
in Kinshasa

their guns we forgive them for what they did," says Celestine, a qualified architect who can find no work. "If not we will take off their arms and legs." When the radio station gates inched open Mr Galenga went to face his fate but Willie was not worried. They had travelled into town on a rebel lorry. In a city routinely robbed by government soldiers the rebels' behaviour was rather shocking. "They actually gave us money," said Willie.

Around him the crowd chanted for Mr Kabila, but the rebel leader shared billing with Etienne Tshisekedi, Kinshasa's most popular opposition figure. In the end it was force, not political persuasion, which deposed Mr Mobutu, but the people insist Mr Kabila must not forget "Ish-Ish", as Mr Tshisekedi is known, scorned by foreign journalists but the population's darling.

"Kabila is president and Tshisekedi must now be prime minister," said one man. But Mr Kabila seemed to regard the man who has spent 15 years trying to wrest power from Mr Mobutu by non-violent means as a bit of a wet. Minister for Sport, it is rumoured, may be the only offer.

"It would be unwise for Kabila to ignore Tshisekedi," said Paulin Tshilomba, a 20-year-old student. "He has so much popular support."

On a nearby boulevard, 200 rebel soldiers were sitting by the roadside, being pampered by the locals. A few cynics looked on "Look at them," said a foreign businessman who had just removed the *de rigueur* Mobutu portrait from her office. "They're just babies. They did not even face a fight to take Kinshasa. How will they make something of this land?"

While Mr Mobutu's soldiers were always in retreat it was



A rebel soldier executes a man accused of being an officer with Mobutu's Presidential Guard in Kinshasa yesterday. Photograph: Corinne Dufka/Reuters

hardly easy for the rebels to get here. Izone, 20, began his trek in Eastern Zaire when Bukavu became the first town to fall to Mr Kabila last October. Two weeks ago he was at Kenge, 200km from Kinshasa, in some of the heaviest fighting of the war.

He is delighted to be here and giggles when asked to identify someone who speaks English. Rwanda, Zaire's tiny eastern neighbour, initially backed the rebellion to clear Hutu militiamen, guilty of the 1994 genocide of 800,000 Rwanda Tutsis, from its border. Its disciplined, skilled and English-speaking soldiers are be-

lieved to have led Zairean troops across 900km of jungle to take Kinshasa.

"There are people who speak English," said Izone. "But you must identify them yourself. Everyone around him claimed to speak only French."

Rwandan Tutsi discipline seems to have rubbed off. The liberators will accept no food. The army, they say, will feed them. In a country riddled with corruption, perhaps Mr Kabila and his generals are trying to sow the first few honest seeds. "Do you have a cigarette," whispered one recruit, and is scowled at by his friend.

These boy-soldiers have

crossed Zaire in flip-flops and Wellingtons. Izone, sticking plasters holding his machine gun together, has ripped old badges - and their associated allegiances - from his uniform, clearly taken from a dead opponent.

Many sniggered when Laurent Kabila promised to march his rag-tag band across Zaire to Kinshasa. But not Izone, then a student. He left his parents and joined the rebels with some friends. He has not seen his family since, but is not returning home.

"We are liberated now and everything must change," he insists, "and I must work for my

country to make it secure." And he is quite emphatic that Mr Kabila will not become another Mobutu. "We fight for the population," he says, to encouraging murmurs "not just for Kabila."

Kinshasans did some liberating of their own. On Saturday they helped 800 men break out of prison after the former government soldiers deserted in droves.

Yesterday, the prison was stripped of furniture, food and weapons, and the roof was just leaving. "C'est mort," shouted a looter, tearing a ragged Zairean flag. They had freed the men, they said, because most were in-

nocent. Among the prisoners were two Russian pilots jailed 16 months ago after their plane crashed just after take-off into a market in Kinshasa. More than 400 people died. The Russian pilots were blamed but many in Kinshasa say corrupt officials were responsible for allowing the market to be based so near the airport.

"We took them to the local priest for safety," said a looter yesterday. The priest confirmed the pilots were picked up yesterday by Russian Embassy officials. Locals seemed to think it was only right that on a day of liberty the two Russians should also be free.

Dictator's location remains a mystery

Agencies

The whereabouts of ex-President Mobutu Sese Seko remained a mystery yesterday. An official in Rabat told Reuters that he was in Morocco at a luxury hotel south of the capital. Other reports said he would leave for Lichtenstein, before heading for France after the forthcoming French election.

However, a friend of Mobutu's family said that Mobutu was still in Gbadolite in Congo-Zaire, at one of his palaces; and the tiny principality of Lichtenstein denied that Mobutu was heading their way.

A rebel spokesman in France said Mobutu and his clan would be pursued. "With us, he will never be in peace. Wherever he goes, we will find him," Zamba Afri Kouylen told radio France-Info. "We regard them as criminals who must be detained and taken to trial by a people's court."

Meanwhile, representatives of the international community yesterday sought guarantees from Laurent Kabila on a transition to democracy, and on the welfare of refugees. South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki told reporters at Luanda airport yesterday that it seemed clear to South Africa that the process of transition agreed upon by Kabila and ousted president Mobutu Sese Seko was on course.

Earlier, Kabila and his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo told UN special envoy Mohamed Sahnoun they would cooperate with UN and other agencies dealing with the refugee crisis. Mr Kabila sent a delegation to Kinshasa to reassure the people about security, but officials would not say when Kabila himself would visit Kinshasa.

Business on the Internet... all potential, no performance, right? With a company that's growing at a rate of 5,000% per year, Jeff Bezos couldn't disagree more. He's CEO and founder of Amazon.com, the world's largest and most prosperous on-line bookstore.

"The Internet can help you gain or lose a lot of customers very quickly" says Jeff.

So he hooked up with DIGITAL. "It's critical to work with a computer company that has experience helping **"The Internet can mean people do business**

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on the net," he says. "It's **for your business** also nice that DIGITAL **or the highway to hell.**

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Clinton starts crusade to find Aids vaccine

Deported asylum-seekers

Iron dragon rolls into H

Pope seeking a century

IMPORTANT NEWS
MORTGAGE CUSTOMERS

Interest Rate

The rate of interest on your mortgage is a key factor in determining your monthly payments. It is important to understand how interest rates work and how they can affect your mortgage. This guide explains the basics of interest rates and how to choose the best mortgage for your needs.

Norwich and Peterborough

سكيا من الاصطناع

soldiers in flip-flops reach their goal

Kabila's exhausted rebels lost their way en route to liberate Kinshasa, writes Ed O'Loughlin

Kinshasa — When the first column of troops from the Alliance of Democratic Forces entered central Kinshasa this weekend they did so by accident, losing their way in the broad streets of a city none had visited before.

We came across them late in the afternoon on Saturday, a company of over 100 heavily burrowed meo standing patiently in single file along the deserted Rue des Poids Lourds. After an officer tried half-heartedly to shoo us away, we fell into step with them as they moved off towards the city centre.

They seemed dog-tired: a young private said they had spent the night at the airport and had marched 25 kilometres that day, fighting a brief action along the way.

"Have you come far?" we asked another young soldier, who had a bag of rifle grenades balanced on his head.

"About 3,000 kilometres." The rebels' combat uniforms, issued six months ago on the other side of Zaire, were now blackened and greasy, and the order of march was loose, but there was no mistaking the superiority of these soldiers over Mobutu's untrained Forces Armées Zaïroises.

As the main body looped along at a steady pace, half a dozen heavily armed scouts kept station 200 yards to the front, cautiously checking each intersection before waving their comrades on. Sporadic firing could still be heard nearby as the remnants of Mobutu's army shot ammunition off into the air. The soldiers were silent and intent, scarcely even acknowledging the cheers and applause from the first small groups of civilians to see them advancing down the empty street.

Where the Rue des Poids Lourds bends into the city's main Boulevard de 30 Juin they stopped to talk to a small group of civilians, then doobled back and turned into the Avenue Wagania, running down to the Congo River's banks.

"They wanted to know where the port was," said a friendly old man from Kasai.

The cautious advance continued, but the scouts walked right past the port buildings and the main body followed them. Small groups of black civilians were joined by clusters of European and Lebanese expatriates, cheering from the gates and walls of their compounds.

The ambush, when it came, was not the type the soldiers were prepared for. Word had got out of their presence and as the company crossed the intersection with the Avenue de la Nation, a large crowd came sweeping down from the Boulevard de 30 Juin, chanting: "Congo Libre, Congo Libre" — "Congo is free".

The order of march was disrupted as delighted civilians tried to embrace the troops. Most were too tired to even raise a smile. An officer got angry and fired his Kalashnikov into the air to clear the road.

In all the confusion someone must have asked the rebels where they thought they were going, because once again the troops had to retrace their steps. They had passed their destination by more than a kilometre, inadvertently liberating downtown Kinshasa in the process.

There was no resistance at the ferry port. The officers and their scouts walked straight on to the pier. At the end of the pier they came to a halt among the silently moored ferry boats. For five minutes they stood there, leaning on their rifles and gazing out over the broad Congo as the sun died in the west and the lights came on across the river in Brazzaville.

"Bleu comme océan, bleu fini," said a taciturn officer who called himself Commandant Jave. Well begun and well ended.

Yesterday morning, rebel units drove in to occupy the city centre on trucks, not even bothering to deploy for combat. Their journey, which began eight months and 3,000 kilometres ago in South Kivu, was over.



Moment of liberation: Children dancing in the streets of Kinshasa as Laurent Kabila's troops consolidated their hold on the capital

Return to Congo

The new regime is intent on erasing the name of Zaire as well as ending the rule of President Mobutu Sese Selo, changing to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This reverts to the name used for the former Belgian colony from 1964 until Mobutu declared in 1971 that the country should be known as Zaire. It is unclear how the rebels aim to avoid confusion with the neighbouring Republic of Congo. The rebels have also changed the name of the mighty Zaire River back to the Congo, and given back provinces their pre-Mobutu names. Haut-Zaire has become Eastern province, and the mineral-rich southern province of Shaba has reverted to Katanga.

AA

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significant shorts

Clinton starts crusade to find Aids vaccine

President Bill Clinton made it a national goal to develop an Aids vaccine within a decade, and said a research centre would be established to help the effort. "With the strides of recent years, it is no longer a question of whether we can develop an Aids vaccine — it is simply a question of when," he said in an address at Morgan State University. An Aids vaccine should be the "first great triumph" of the 21st century.

Reuters — Baltimore

Deported asylum-seeker alive

An asylum-seeker allegedly killed after being deported to Algeria is alive, the Home Office said. Former policeman Mourad Amara, deported on 27 April, was reported to have been killed in custody of Algerian authorities. But yesterday he met the British ambassador to Algeria. Deportations to Algeria were suspended in the light of the allegations.

PA — London

Iron dragon rolls into HK

China opened direct train services with Hoog Koog, binding the colony closer to China before its return to China in 44 days. The service, which leaves Peking every other day, will cover the 1,250 miles to Kowloon in 29 hours and 40 minutes.

AP — Peking

Pope seeking a century

A jovial, healthy-looking Pope John Paul marked his 77th birthday yesterday, saying that although he was approaching his "sunset", he hoped to live to be 100. The Pontiff was feted by children and other worshippers at a Rome parish during one of his regular Sunday-morning visits to churches in the capital.

Reuters — Rome

IMPORTANT NEWS FOR MORTGAGE CUSTOMERS

Interest Rate Change

The rates of interest for new and existing mortgage customers (in appropriate cases the basic rate) will increase by 0.36% with effect from 19th May 1997. The Society's standard variable base rate will become 7.35%. The new rates continue to reflect the Society's commitment to mutuality and the benefits this brings to its customers.

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Death becomes him

The pulp writer Jim Thompson died penniless and all but forgotten. Now Hollywood producers can't get enough of his 'sour, dead-end view of the world'. Poetic justice... By **Tom Dewe Mathews**

Who says that America always looks to the future? The hippest writer in Hollywood these days has been dead for more than 20 years. For, aside (maybe) from Shakespeare, nobody's writings have been plundered for the screen quite as thoroughly as cult pulp novelist Jim Thompson. First up for the cameras in 1975 came *The Killer Inside Me*, with its sociopathic sheriff who pins poor chumps to the floor with pitiless maxims - "Haste makes waste, in my opinion" - until their shoes squeak from squirming; next, the Nevada desert-bleached noir of Sam Peckinpah's *The Getaway*; then a brief detour over to France where Thompson's loopy lawman from the Texan high hills in *Pap. 1280* was transplanted to French West Africa for Bertrand Tavernier's *Coup de Torchon*. A decade later came *Maggie*, Greenwald's gritty, grungy version of *The Kill-Off*, featuring the murder of Luanne Platter, a flabby, talmucal hypochondriac blackmailer who terrorises her local community from the phone beside her sick-bed; then James Foley's *After Dark*. My Sweet loped in with its semi-institutionalised hobo struggling in the aftermath of prolonged shock therapy; while, finally, we were trapped in the incestuous sandwich that was Stephen Frears' version of Thompson's thriller *The Grifters*.

And now the second - or is it the fifth? - Thompson wave is coming. The actual source, though, is drying up. Because, where Steven Halaberg's current production of *A Swell-looking Babe* (retitled *Hit Me*) is being taken from a classic Thompson novel, the other upcoming movie from the "dime-store Dostoyevsky" had to lift its script from a 50-page novella that Thompson cranked out over a slack weekend in 1957. Even so, *This World, Then the Fireworks* contains the essential crotch-kick Thompson ingredients of sex (within the family), corrupt cops, murder, blackmail and betrayal.

Yet, in spite of all this posthumous attention, when he died in 1977, Jim Thompson was nearly broke. Not one of his 29 novels was in print and he was an all but forgotten figure. So who was this overlooked and under-filmed writer? And why are movie producers now so desperate to film his words, even if they come from the

bottom of his wastepaper basket? Apart from the intriguing Freudian fact that Thompson's own father was a corrupt cop, the same answer fits both questions. Donald Westlake, who was drafted in to adapt *The Grifters* for the Frears film, thinks that Thompson's books, with their "sour, dead-end view of the world", came out of "his hard-scabble roots" in Anadarko, Oklahoma.

Thompson was a seriously intentioned novelist who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Depression robbed him of the college education that he needed. Instead, the future Prince of Pulp became an oil rigger, a lumberjack, also, ironically, a movie-house manager and even, in a fit of desperation, trod the boards of huckster. "He always knew," says Westlake, "that he was better than the world he found himself in and that's what gave him that bitter power he had." After wandering through the drought-ravaged south-west, where he acquired a taste for cocaine as well as "the grift" - the art of the confidence trick - Thompson drifted back up north. There, in Oklahoma, he joined the radical Federal Writers Project and, with more Marxist hope than material conviction, wrote his first crime novel in 1949. His instincts were correct. The dialogue was too raw, his imagination too overripe and his plot too tragically real for the film noir of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. Their anti-heroes won, whatever the odds, while Thompson's barely made it to the last page: and, if they did, by then a *femme fatale* would invariably have embedded her hooks into them.

And that's why Jim Thompson is so popular with film-makers today. He offers directors the possibility of making present-day film noir. Westlake has a succinct explanation for this: "To update it, all you have to do is take their hats off." Thompson's recent biographer, Robert Polito, however, zeroes in on the underlying attraction. "Hammett and Chandler," he says, "focused on detectives. Thompson focused on the criminal. His first-person heroes are more menacing, more malevolent and more explicitly psychotic. Also," he adds, "directors are fascinated by that sense, which Thompson gives you, that you're never quite sure of what's going on, that the world you're seeing already comes to you deflected and bent by

the people telling you the stories." Certainly, this off-kilter angle on the bottomed-out world of the criminal pulled in Larry Gross who adapted *This World, Then the Fireworks* for the screen. "Yes, the characters are extreme but what made me think *This World* would make a good film is that those extremes of behaviour emanate from something that is logical. In other words," he explains, "there is an emotional justification for their behaviour and, because his characters are driven to such an extreme place, it compels an audience to watch the film."

The critic Alexander Walker has already exclaimed that *This World, Then the Fireworks* is "one of the most perverse films noir ever made from a Jim Thompson story" and he could have a point. To begin with, the movie, like the book, starts out with an off-screen narrated flashback to childhood. Alongside his twin sister Carol, our narrator - and psychotic hero - follows the sound of shotgun blasts to a neighbour's house: "The man on the floor didn't have a head, hardly any head at all. And that was funny, wasn't it? ... But the funniest thing, we laughed loudest about was Dad and the woman. The woman who was the wife of the man without any head. The wife of the man Dad had killed to keep from getting killed. Dad and the woman. Dad who went to the electric chair, and the woman who committed suicide. Standing there naked."

Aside, though, from this primal lift-off into subsequent matricide, sex, more sex and more murder, Larry Gross had one other advantage over fellow Thompson adaptors. As Robert Polito reveals in his informative biography, *This World*, with its "stripped-down style", was probably intended to be a film treatment rather than a literary work. None the less, due to its brevity, Gross had to scour every shred of the story we could use. Also, he had to add some "details". "There are no police investigations," he points out, "of the crimes in the book. Now, whether Thompson was being lazy or indifferent, I don't know; but I thought that the audience would feel nagged by this, so I filled in those sort of holes."

For his part, Donald Westlake, who also tried to be a pulp writer, has an explanation for any dramatic or literary shortfalls from Thompson.



Thompson tales: Gena Gershon in *This World, Then the Fireworks*; Kim Basinger and Alec Baldwin in *The Getaway*; Jackson Sims and Andrew Lee Barrett in *The Kill-Off*; John Cusack and Angelica Huston in *The Grifters* (clockwise from left)

"What flaws a lot of his work is that he was writing too fast, for too little money, for unimportant markets. And he knew it. But he didn't have the time or impetus to go back and smooth things out and get it right. He had to get it down, send it in, get his \$2000 and pay the rent. I did some of that in my early days," remembers Westlake, "so I know what you tend to do. You're going along until you get to the point where you say, 'Oh, my god, this story isn't going to work unless she was married before...' You can go back to where you should have done it in the first place. Or you can

just stick it in with: 'She was married before...' and keep going. And that's what Thompson does. So what I did with *The Grifters* was to give it that one more draft, that he couldn't afford to give it."

Alternatively, Larry Gross believes that "the badness that comes from writing too quickly is also part of Thompson's greatness" because it provides "a certain kind of psychological urgency, it's bad writing," he says, "that achieves a good effect." Here, however, Westlake agrees, because he suddenly interrupts his own evaluation of Thompson's use

of "demented logic" with a story remembered from Malgrat's creator, Georges Simenon. "He said that 19th-century writers presented their characters walking towards a cliff, and 20th-century writers had those same characters teetering on the edge. But Jim Thompson showed no mercy: he shoved them off." As for Thompson himself, he was aware of his own cinematic and commercial value. Just before he died - having smoked his last pack of Fall Malls - he advised his wife to guard his copyrights. "Just you wait," he promised her, "I'll be famous after

Jack Dee was keen to impress the audience for his first extended West End run, so he splashed out on a 400 quid suit, a rather too-bright blue two-piece. "Then I looked in the mirror," he recounts, "and suddenly realised... 'Sainsbury's manager'."

This is Dee all over. Try as he might, he remains extraordinarily ordinary - the archetypal bloke next door (who he actually happened to become a millionaire by being the archetypal bloke next door). He just doesn't suit megastar trappings. He's "a good laugh", the jokey mate down the pub or, perhaps, the supermarket.

His act is appealingly old-fashioned in that it doesn't have a gimmick - unless you count the suit. There are no surrealistic flights of fancy about underpants posing as undercover agents or Hannibal's ele-

COMEDY

Jack Dee

Gielgud Theatre, London

phants skidding down the Alps. The closest he gets is when he imagines what it would have been like if an Englishman had been the first man on the moon. "Ooo, the trouble we had getting here," Dee is the perfect example of that dying breed: One Man and His Mic.

His currency is the minutiae of everyday life, those annoying little things that nag away at you. He is perplexed by the fact that petrol stations always seem to have a special offer on bird-tables - "That's a real impulse buy," he snorts. Equally, he is baffled by items like the cardigan de-hooper in the *Innovations* catalogue and freaked

out by the choices on offer at the car-wash: "All you want is a hutton that says, 'Get the birdshit off the bonnet!'"

There are flashes of his failed miserabilist tendency - the programme dubs him "Little Jack Scornor", and he rants at one point that everyone should be tested on how quickly they can open a sweet-wrapper before being allowed into a cinema. He is also fond of depicting the world as one huge conspiracy against him. He is highly suspicious that at the end of every phone call to a pizza delivery service, the restaurateur always says: "Just one minute, sir. I'll just get some-

one who's never spoken English before to take your address."

But Dee is just too damned likeable to sustain for long the facade of what the tabloids are wont to call "TV's Mr Misery". Indeed, in less skilful hands, a lot of the material - domestic pets and entertainers at children's parties, for instance - would be downright cosy.

Things haven't gone entirely swimmingly for Dee on TV of late - *Jack and Jeremy's Real Live*, his series with Jeremy Hardy, ended up being broadcast in a graveyard slot by Channel 4 last year. But in the live arena, he has few peers. As a stand-up, he's as professional as any Sainsbury's manager - and a good deal funnier.

Jack Dee continues at the Gielgud Theatre, Shaftesbury Ave, London W1 (0171-494 3540) to 21 June

James Rampton

MUSIC

Philip Glass

RFH, London

its presentation in terms of the classical orchestra. Granted that Brahms, among our most gifted young conductors, gave the music his all, displaying a fine command of the podium. The missing element was the *frisson* of fine scoring, an absence made palpable at times by an instrumental sound that seemed akin to straightforward transcription. Off-beat, complex, trombones and basses in the first movement gave a certain vulgar swagger suited to the "heroes" theme itself, to which cymbals added a pleasing harshness. But the stern trombones in "Sense of Doubt" invoked only melodrama, which may have been appropriate in the original dance context, but which, in terms of abstract music, was simply an effect without cause. There was rather more point to the hazy arabesques and ostinati of "Abdumajid", with a sense of magic at the end when a pair of harps took over the gently vibrating accompaniment. The finale, "V2 Schneider", was typical fast Glass (cue for next album?), with the bright scales and Tchaikovskyian third-related woodwind chords that mark his recent harmonic manner.

These hallmarks were present on Friday, too, in the scherzo of the *Low Symphony*, recast for the Glass Ensemble in a way that shed further doubt on the orchestral garb of *Heroes*, and being sharper, more focused, than that of the orchestral *Low*



A Glass apart: the composer who, last week, offered an *oeuvre* package tour

as well. The Ensemble played classic scores: "Facades" from *Glassworks*, *Music in Similar Motion* and "The Funeral" from *Akhmatov* to match Act 2 of *Satyagraha* heard on the previous day. Having recently sat through the three CDs of *Einstein on the Beach* in its new recordings, this writer was wary of hearing "The Building" from the same opera on Friday, but is happy to report that it needed rather less patience than the original.

Nicholas Williams

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Frankl/ Pau/ Kirshbaum

Wigmore Hall, London

I was Fritz Kreisler who at the height of his career in 1910 remarked: "Ensemble playing is a luxury for which I now have very little time. And so I look forward to every summer, when Ysaye, Thibaud, Casals, Fognoli and I meet in Paris. Ysaye and I alternate in playing the violin, but the queer thing about it is that we all want to play second violin."

The team of Peter Frankl (piano), György Pau (violin) and Ralph Kirshbaum (cello) will not have had in flight over who played second fiddle but if the understanding of Kreisler's remark is that chamber music allows ego to be gracefully laid aside, 25 years of togetherness by Frankl, Pau and Kirshbaum shows an astonishing welding of friendship and music-making. And a hall such as the Wigmore, where currently the trio are celebrating their anniversary, provides a perfect setting. The lucky (and large) audiences turning out for these concerts can really have

felt they were eavesdropping on an evening's chamber music rather than attending anything more formal. Just as chamber music should be.

The three concerts are a model of musically intelligent planning. It is the trio's 25th anniversary and a jaunt through the great piano trios - from Haydn to today - might have been expected on, indeed, the cashing in on the composer anniversary train (after all, Schubert and Mendelssohn wrote some of the greatest trios). But no. The Frankl/ Pau/ Kirshbaum trio have an eye (and an ear) not only to the next 25 years of trio playing but how the present relates to the past. Each concert has resourcefully contained a con-

temporary work - in last Tuesday's concert, a violin sonata by the Hungarian composer Ivan Erod and, in last Saturday's, one of the century's most important works for cello, the immensely demanding sonata by Elliott Carter. (On Wednesday, a newly commissioned trio from James MacMillan will be heard.)

But what has made the first two concerts so unusual has been the placing of Brahms (in triumphant anniversary mode) at the beginning of each programme - his three trios (Op 8, 87 and 101) - and Beethoven's three late trios (Op 70 nos 1 & 2, Op 97) at the end, which has provided the frame for these concerts. Even against works from this century, it's the new-

ness of Brahms that continues to amaze. Nothing that Erod could dream up could compete with the astonishing originality of Brahms' nervy Op 87 Scherzo and as for Elliott Carter's famed metric modulation, Brahms was at it at least 50 years earlier.

The Frankl/ Pau/ Kirshbaum trio has no snappy title because their names say it all. The match of tone between Pau and Kirshbaum is extraordinary - in the same register it's not always easy to distinguish between the two. And Frankl, on full stick, never drowned or threatened to drown. This is a trio whose strength lies in understatement. A more moving and elegant performance of Beethoven's "Archduke" trio, such well-tempered grandeur, would be hard to find. Kreisler was right, luxury indeed.

The final concert in the series is Wed. 7.30pm (0171-935 2141)

Annette Morreau

Tomorrow in the Tabloid: RB Kitaj tells Andrew Lambirth why he's had it with Britain

CLASSIFIED

Public Notices

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Conservatism's virgin soldier

Interview



Deborah Ross
talks to
ANN WIDDECOMBE

I have bought Ann Widdecombe a big bunch of flowers. Tulips, they are. Pale pink and dark pink ones with some sprigs of Sweet William thrown in. The florist and I declare them divine. As does Miss Widdecombe, initially.

"How gorgeous," she whoops with some rapture while making a big thing of burying her nose in them and snorting: "Ahhhh, lovely." Well, I say, you've had a pretty tough week. ("Yes, yes, it's been absolute hell.") And, hey, it's not as if you ever got any from Derek Lewis, is it?

Thankfully, she laughs, then says "how kind" before tossing them dismissively on to a work surface where I know they will be left to wither and die. There is no sign of a vase about the place. She never glances at them again. Ultimately, I don't think Miss Widdecombe cares much for flowery things. Indeed, had Mr Lewis ever seriously wished to woo her he would have been better off buying her a book about, say, Religion and Society in Kent, 1610 to 1914. Although, when I later inspect her bookcase, I see immediately that she has it already. (It's between *Struggle for Heaven* and that other lively read, *Where Is God In All This?*)

Now, what are we to make of Miss Widdecombe after recent events? Should we admire her? Personally, I am beginning to think we should, but when I tell her this she comes over all bossy. I mustn't, she says, confuse admiration with delight at seeing the Tories in yet more trouble. She knows, she adds, that "I'm hinging more pleasure to the opposition than I am to my own party. I can see that." Then, perhaps warningly: "I do have a brain."

Yes, Miss Widdecombe, I'm sure you do. I'm sure you never made it to ministerial rank on coquettishness alone. But, still, it takes guts to take on Michael Howard. It would have been a lot easier to have kept quiet, wouldn't it? "Yes, much easier," she accepts, but her conscience was such that she couldn't. "Derek Lewis told me not to do it. Friends told me not to do it. It took me a long time to summon my courage. But once I'd decided it was the right thing to do, I held to my resolution and have done it."

Yes, she's wrecked Howard's leadership chances. She might even have wrecked his political career, full stop. We might draw pleasure from this but she, she insists, does not. "I actually feel very, very sorry for Michael. Really, I do. I vividly remember the night before the general election when he rang me up to wish me good luck and left a message on my answer machine. He had a definite catch in his voice and I knew from that he was expecting to lose his

seat. I prayed very, very hard for him despite all that had passed between us." Howard did retain his seat. Although whether this proves there is a God or not is, of course, up for debate.

We meet at her office round the corner from the House. There is an anti-abortion, foetus-cupped-in-hand poster on one wall and a jokey Garfield job on the other. ("If you want to look thinner, hang out with people fatter than you.") She is wearing something large and Berkeleys and patterned. She is not much interested in fashion or "making the most of yourself", as my mother would say, although at one point she does boast about having worn hot-pants when they first came out. "In fact, I was among the first to wear hot-pants." Her hairdo is its usual spookily witch's cowl. A crucifix hangs round her neck. But, overall, the impression is less Hammer House of Horror than, say, the rather eccentric, battily religious headmistress of some girls' school. Does she find the Doris Karloff business hurtful? "I'm inured to it," she says.

Moments before our meeting, she had bumped into the Chief Whip in the street. It is the first time she's seen him since all this hoo-ha broke out. And? "I said: 'There is nothing personal in it, you know?' To which he replied, 'I'm getting wet. It's raining.'"

Last night, Miss Widdecombe took the feud with Howard to new heights when she delivered to his house advance warning of the accusations she plans to make in the Commons today during a home affairs debate. This is something to look forward to. Miss Widdecombe is a considerable woman. Considerable in size - monumentally-bosomed, in fact - and considerable in that she has beliefs which she believes in absolutely. Miss Widdecombe, I ask at one point, are there any grey areas with you? "Well," she replies after some thought, "I wasn't too sure about Sunday trading. But I can't immediately think of anything else, no."

If Miss Widdecombe is scary, she is most scary when it comes to her views.

Aside from being anti-abortion, pro-hanging, anti-divorce and all the things we already know she is, I discover quite a few of her other *beliefs*.

Feminism is one. "What a whinge!" she cries. "And positive discrimination! I would find it humiliating." Working mothers are another. "So sad. If you have children, the children must come first." And then there is sex before marriage, which she is all for. No, only joking. She is rather against it, as you can imagine. It undermines the family unit, she says. Yes, she appreciates sex isn't just about procreation ("Otherwise, why would women past the menopause still

want to do it?") but, still, it is only for marriage. "It is the physical side of a life-long commitment," she says. Sex before marriage, she continues, is only acceptable if you do it with a fiancé. "At least, then, you are going to marry him."

Miss Widdecombe has never had sex. Yes, she's still a virgin at 50. She's only ever had one romance. It was with a fellow undergraduate at Oxford. But they never became engaged and so never slept together. I wonder, naturally, if she will ever look back and regret not giving sex a try, if only out of curiosity, if only to see what all the fuss is about. "Goodness gracious, no," she exclaims. "Why does everyone think you can't manage without sex or telly. I do very nicely without both." No telly? "Too much filth," she barks.

No sex? No telly? What does she do when she gets back to her little flat in Kennington, south London, on an evening? Cook? No, she is, she says, very much a beans-on-toast, take-away fish and chips sort of person. Read? Yes, she likes detective novels, particularly Ruth Rendell.

Cinema? She's befriended the two children of the family who own her local chippy and, come a recess, they usually drag her off to see something or other. Most recently, she saw *101 Dalmatians*. "We giggled hysterically, it was so funny." Friends? Yes, many, she claims, although, funny enough, they are mostly male. "I do prefer the company of men. They don't

try to psychologically analyse you like women do. I find their company much more relaxing. But I do have some women friends. Gillian Shepherd is one."

Although, when all's said and done, Miss Widdecombe would appear to lead quite an unpopulated life. I think it would be a mistake to view her as troubled or lonely or sad. Miss Widdecombe has her beliefs for company. If anything else came into her life, it would just get in the way.

Her father, Murray, was a senior defence official, while her mother, Rita, was a stay-at-home mum as all mums, in her opinion, should be.

"I accept, of course, some women have to go out to work. It's the ones who choose to do it I'm against." We have quite a nice spat about this. What, I interrupt, about women who don't want to be economically dependent on men? What about women who need intellectual stimulation. At this last, she quite loses her rag. "Need intellectual stimulation? Need it? Who is to say staying home with children can't be intellectually stimulating?" Miss Widdecombe does not have children of her own. I do not think Miss Widdecombe has ever had to do the same five-piece Spot puzzle 478 times in the course of the same weekend. Miss Widdecombe, as you have probably gathered, is quite magnificent when it comes in talking about things she knows nothing about.

She is, she says, much more like her father, a tough career civil servant, than her mother, who is "soft and kind and gentle". And Ann is never any of these things? "Actually, I like to think I am kind and gentle and, sometimes, I am much softer than I would wish. I do feel for people. I feel for Michael, although he wouldn't understand that. I hate seeing people suffer. Loathe it. Hate it. I don't walk past beggars. I like furry, puny things." Her cat, Sweep, died recently at 24. Yes, she did have a little cry over that.

The early part of her childhood was spent abroad until her family returned to this country when she was nine and despatched her to a convent boarding school. No, boarding schools are not worse than working mothers.

She was with her mother "whenever I came home for the holidays". At first, though, she wasn't happy at the school. A girl in her dorm bullied her. She appealed to her parents to take her away. They refused. "They encouraged me to stick it out and get through it. Eventually, that girl and I became good friends." I think here Miss Widdecombe learned that suffering is part of the human condition and must be endured. If she does give in to beggars, I doubt she gives very much. Later, when we talk about surrogacy, which naturally horrifies her, she says: "It's all part of the modern malaise that you mustn't live with

anything that is causing you unhappiness, isn't it?" Her family, actually, is Anglican (her elder brother Malcolm is a Church of England canon). But she ended up at a convent school because, quite simply, it was the best school in the Bath area. She got a lot of stick, she says, for not being Catholic but she didn't care.

"Every time they gave me a rosary I lost it down the back of the piano in the recreation room. I stood up solidly for who I was and what I believed in." Now, though, she is a Catholic, having famously converted a couple of years ago. But she insists this had nothing to do with what happened at school. She was, she says, ultimately attracted to Rome because "alone of all the churches it stood firm with regard to popular opinion". Rather like she does? "Ah, yes, I can see a connection there."

She studied Latin at Birmingham University then politics at Oxford. She had, she says, decided to become a politician when she was 14. She found Churchill inspiring. Plus, I reckon, she saw politics as an excellent way of taking her beliefs and pressing them upon others. She worked in marketing and then as a financial administrator for London University until she won Maidstone in 1987 and became John Major's first woman minister.

Yes, she says, she should have resigned in October 1995, when Lewis was sacked as director-general of the prison service. She remembers how Howard, at the time, referred to Lewis's "bitter spleen" and how disgusted she felt. "It was the triumphalist, gloating tone in his voice I couldn't take." But she didn't resign then, she says, because although she had the impression Lewis had been unfairly dealt with, she didn't have the proof. "And Michael is just so forensically clever." Also, "My resignation wouldn't have achieved anything then. I wasn't going to get Derek reinstated. All I would have achieved was a complete wrecking of what looked like a recovery in the party's fortunes, even though it proved illusory like all our other recoveries." She is speaking up now, she says, because Michael is not fit to be leader.

I do not think Miss Widdecombe is a political opportunist. I do not think she has ever put self-advancement before integrity. She is standing up for who she is and what she believes in as solidly as ever. For this, she deserves a certain respect, even though it means overlooking her views, her refusal to be included in any kind of sisterhood and, now I think about it, the fact she only ever sees children's films.

Yes, I do think I admire her in a strange kind of way. Although, that said, I don't think I'll be inviting her to my next Ann Summers party.

In loving memory, with a rock backing

A traditional funeral didn't seem quite right for his partner, but Andrew G Marshall found the perfect compromise

The rock'n'roll generation has grown accustomed to doing things its own way. We privatised the institution of marriage by living together and fought to have our babies the way that we, rather than doctors, wanted. So it is not surprising that when facing death, the traditional funeral with the obligatory Church of England vicar does not appeal to us. While many of us might hold strong spiritual beliefs, few have any regular contact with the Church and certainly do not want the "next priest off the rank" to eulogise our lives.

My partner was just 43 and very much a child of rock'n'roll. With a rather wry sense of humour, the Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want" was requested for the funeral - just one of many explicit instructions: "I do not want any sad faces, because I had a good life, and no religion." My problem was that my partner's parents, both in their eighties, do have a strong faith and "seeing their child off properly" would be

a great comfort. How could I reconcile these two sets of wishes? If they had demanded to have things their way, it would have been easy to fight, but there is nothing more heartbreaking than seeing two elderly, and themselves infirm, parents trying to understand this perversion of the natural order of death and then struggling to accept that there will be no formal service.

Some might argue that funerals can be personalised; indeed I have great admiration for the natural death movement and people like former Radio 1 disc jockey Mike Raven, who even dug his own grave on the moor close to where he lived. But they are very much in the minority. Talking about death is extremely difficult; two-thirds of

people fail even to leave a will. Until I found myself really having to discuss dying I had always imagined it would be no problem: my generation talks openly about sex, and we are far better at discussing money than our parents.

However, the reality is that even when death is shadowing every move, you concentrate on the positive and live for the moment. It is the only way to steal some happy moments from the last few months. Furthermore, an alternative funeral takes an incredible amount of planning, and although someone who is terminally ill can make general outlines like my partner's "no reli-

gion", the problem is turning that into reality. What kind of service? Who will conduct it? Every time you step outside the established pattern there is another decision to

'Everybody wore bright colours and brought flowers from their gardens'

make. The closer the funeral came, the more questions I had and the less likely my partner was to have the energy to discuss them. Finally, I was told: "Do what you feel is best."

After much heart-searching, I decided that a funeral was not

only for the deceased but part of the healing process for the bereaved, too. With a traditional funeral for the parents and then a memorial service to celebrate my partner's life, I felt I fulfilled everybody's wishes.

"Let me know if there is something I can do," is something that all widows and widowers are forever hearing. Putting a memorial service together can harness this goodwill. I felt much better about co-opting my friends than I had when I handed everything over to the smooth professionalism of the funeral director. One friend loaned a large house for the service,

another co-ordinated, another scanned a favourite photo into their computer and printed off smiling pictures of my partner to place on every chair. In all, about a third of the guests either helped arrange or actively participated in the event.

At the memorial service everybody wore bright colours and brought flowers from their gardens. A live band was hired to entertain the guests as they arrived and to perform special songs during the service: a close friend was master of ceremonies; poems were read and clips from favourite movies were shown. Anybody who wished to share a memory was invited to speak, though British reserve meant that although many wanted

to, few had the courage. Video cameras were set up to record everything (although it will be a long time before I feel like watching the results).

A perfect balance was created between the sorrow we felt and my partner's desire that we enjoy ourselves. We could smile as well as cry - something that had been impossible at the crematorium.

Not surprisingly, it was this memorial celebration, rather than the traditional funeral, which helped me make a massive internal change and become grateful for the time we shared together rather than just mourning our lost future.

Not one of the guests had ever been to a memorial service before, but there was universal agreement that it was too good to leave to the rich and famous.

I found it so beautiful that my only regret was that we couldn't do everything all over again - but that is how I feel about life with my partner, too.

Get the words right for a genuine welfare state

What is this "radical reform of the welfare state" that the Prime Minister wants to be remembered for? Let us hope that Frank Field, his bold choice as Minister of State for Social Security, will tell us more in his speech tomorrow.

The trouble with "radical", one of Tony Blair's favourite words, is that he uses it because it is a feel-good, all-purpose word with no distinctive ideological markings, meaning only that he will not be afraid to take big decisions. But it is the kind of language that sets some people off on the wrong track. Bill Clinton found himself passing the right-wing ammunition to a Republican Congress with his similarly ambiguous slogan promising to "end welfare as we know it". As we report today on page 18, Robert Skidelsky, the Conservative peer, takes "radical" to mean pulling up the roots of the welfare state and starting again from first (neo-liberal) principles. He advocates the privatisation of unemployment insurance and the health and education services, with only a residual taxpayer-funded safety net.

That tired free-market vision is certainly not what Mr Blair and Mr Field have in mind when they use the word "radical". Back in your box, Lord Skidelsky. (A comfortable red-leather-padded box it is too, much in need of radical reform itself – but that is a subject for another time.)

No, Mr Blair seems to use the word in the sense of "going back to the roots of". He cites the Liberal government of 1906, which began the construction of the welfare state, and the Labour government of 1945, which completed it, as his models. Labour's thinking on the National Health Service may be unimaginative, but both Mr Blair's personal experience and his communitarian principles mean there can be no question but that it will remain a public service. So will education. That leaves social security. And here there is another problem of language: Labour's adoption of the Americanism "welfare".

Labour's key pledge is to get 250,000 young people "off benefit and into work", but this is often shortened to "Gordon Brown's welfare-to-work plan", which hardly makes sense at all. Not only that, the use of the alliterative w-word threatens to taint the welfare state as a whole – which enjoys substantial public support – with images of scrounging and fecklessness.

And the fundamental problem facing "radical" reformers of social security is that scrounging and fecklessness account for a small proportion of the total budget. Let us rehearse the facts, taken from an excellent citizens' guide to how the Government spends our money, called simply *£300 Billion*, by Richard Cocks and Roger Bentley. Social security spending, £100bn a year, accounts for one third of the total.



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Of this, more than £40bn goes to pensioners, mostly in the form of the basic state pension, but also income support, housing benefit and disability benefits. The question is how to spread second pensions to all without forcing people to rely on sharks in the private pensions market. There is no scope here for saving public money even in the longest of terms, as Peter Lilley discovered during the election campaign.

Take out other sickness and disability benefits from the social security budget (£20bn, and already squeezed by new tests) and we are left with just three main headings. Benefits for lone-

parent families cost £9bn, the registered unemployed cost about £8bn and child benefit costs about £7bn.

None of these totals can be reduced significantly in the short term. Maybe Harriet Harman can act on her rhetoric of helping lone parents get into work. Maybe Gordon Brown will take child benefit away from the better-off. But there is no sudden big pay-out from the Treasury fruit machine in either case.

Set against these figures, the highest estimate of the cost of fraud in the benefits system is £2bn. This is a huge sum, and fraud is probably endemic in parts of the system, such as housing benefit.

Frank Field is quite right to point to the incentives to fraud which are built in to the system. But the likely savings even from an urgent and bold restructuring are small in relation to the big picture.

The same applies to workfare, the other quick fix. Early evidence from the Tory government's trials suggests that a surprisingly high proportion of the unemployed will suddenly "find" work when invited to work on a public scheme in return for their benefit. This is the logical extension of Gordon Brown's four "offers you cannot refuse" to young unemployed people, and will no doubt be pursued with moralistic vigour by the new government. But for the plan to retain its moral authority, the training and work schemes must be of high quality and must pay more than benefits. Again, any savings will be relatively small.

However, both quick-fix approaches point in the right direction, and a redirection of the social security system could release large sums of money over time.

The welfare state should not be reinvented from scratch, but its moral basis could be rediscovered, and the whole ethos shifted from hand-outs expected as of right to active help in return for effort. But that means language is important. Let us hear less of radicalism and welfare. It is Mr Blair's strength that he can command a

rhetoric of public morality and social cohesion which could make a modernised system make sense to everyone, and thus secure public support. It is time for him to talk about unemployment, sickness and old age with the same clarity and directness with which he talked about crime and the family when he came to the Labour leadership three years ago.

This would not be radicalism in the rootless sense of the word, but it could make a dramatic difference if the Labour Government remains in power long enough to follow it through.

So farewell then, mon savant

A footballer is like a precious flower. That blossoms only for a short time, as one of our greatest contemporary philosophers might have said. In a dream, fame is sweeter than the tart flesh of apples to children. But sometimes the dream must come to an end and it is time to wake up. The poet must look out of the window of the speeding train and know that his terminus is arriving. For every time there is a football season, there is a time to play and a time to go. Now it is time for Eric Cantona to go and for the doctorates to be written.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Abuse: now we must learn the lessons

Sir: The decision of the jury in the Buckinghamshire case ("Three convicted after reign of terror at care home", 15 May) is to be welcomed. The Association for Residential Care believes that there should now be an independent inquiry into all aspects of the way the case was handled.

It would seem from her public comments that the chair of Buckinghamshire social services committee considers the conduct of the regulatory authority is something she feels she can be proud of. However, it was only the public outcry over the case when Buckinghamshire's Inspection Unit report detailing sustained abuse over many years was leaked which forced the police to reopen the case, leading to the recent conviction.

There were many agencies and professionals involved in this case: the local police, local social services, the (allegedly independent) Inspection Unit, the regional SSI, the health service. Not all the families involved were aware of the stories of abuse and the revelations in *The Independent* came as a rude awakening.

There are many lessons to be learnt about inter-agency responsibility and co-operation, about responding appropriately to allegations of abuse and taking account of the degree of vulnerability of adults with learning disabilities. If 10 years of abuse, followed by a three-year investigation and trial arising from a leaked document is counted by those responsible for protecting vulnerable people as a success, one wonders what more would have to happen to constitute failure.

JAMES CHURCHILL
Chief Executive
Association for Residential Care
Chislehurst, Dorthshire

Sir: Dr Maurice Brook (letter, 16 May) draws attention to the eventual judgment against three staff in two Buckinghamshire homes for people with learning disabilities. These were large homes, seemingly cut off from the local community, with residents sponsored by local authorities from all over the country, and in some cases with no local authority even theoretically interested in their personal welfare. Sadly, abuse has also occurred in hospitals, hostels, large and small homes and within the family home.

Mencap approaches these issues with responsibility for some 3,300 people with learning disabilities in some 530 homes, and also as an advocate for the far larger number of people supported by other agencies or by their families.

Dr Brook is right that independent inspection would strengthen present safeguards. We would also advocate better training and vetting of staff – the recent Police Act, which was prompted by Mencap (among others), has opened the way. Most importantly, we advocate the growth of small community homes, including those owned by the residents, which are genuinely integrated into local communities, with local people looking out for their neighbours.

We also need a police and court system which will more readily bring to book those who, in whatever setting, are responsible for the emotional, financial, physical and sexual abuse of people with learning difficulties. That there was first cause for concern in



1991 and a verdict was only reached in 1997 says much for the persistence of some of those concerned to secure justice – but very little for the system, which seems to impede rather than further justice.

BRIAN MCGINNIS
Mencap Special Adviser
London EC1

Tunnel as safe as it can be

Sir: Since 1968, more than a million lorries have been carried through very long railway tunnels on open wagons with the drivers riding in a carriage at the front. This method of transport has not resulted in one serious casualty or death in all this time.

Enclosing the existing Channel Tunnel shuttle wagons is not the easy option that Alan Beard suggests (letter, 17 May). Height as well as weight restrictions would have to be imposed to provide space under the roofs for roller shutters to close off the ends of the wagons. Such a limited service would not compete with the ferries.

Building new wagons would cost £400m, and £600m of revenue would be lost while they were developed. Given that Eurotunnel has already borrowed £80m on which it cannot pay interest, this money is simply not available. Were the Safety Authority to demand full enclosure, the freight shuttle would be wiped out and so would Eurotunnel – a strange reward for a 100 per cent safety record in human terms.

RICHARD HOPE
"Railway Gazette"
Sutton, Surrey

Are Sinn Fein pair real MPs?

Sir: Dr Oliver Rafferty (letter, 16 May) makes a bizarre claim that the Speaker's decision to refuse Commons facilities to Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness amounts to a repudiation by the British ruling classes of the results of the testing by Adams and McGuinness of their claims at the ballot box and the setting aside of the democratic choices of Northern Ireland nationalists. Their decision to refuse to take their seats amounts to a deliberate disenfranchisement of all their respective constituents.

They are not in any real sense Members of Parliament until they accept the rules of joining that parliament, namely swearing the oath of allegiance. They were elected "to serve" as Members of Parliament: if they will not serve, how can they be entitled to any related facilities?

Those who voted for Adams and McGuinness may be happy for them not to take their seats, but should not the disenfranchised voters of these two constituencies have the right to representation in Parliament? If the winner of an election refuses to take his seat, why aren't the voters entitled to a by-election?

MICHAEL VARCOE-COCKS
London W6

Sir: The decision of the Speaker of the House of Commons to exclude duly elected members of the House from enjoying its privileges unless

they swear allegiance to the Crown is a grave political mistake and essentially undemocratic. No decision could be more detrimental to the cause of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. The issue at the heart of its conflict is precisely acceptance or rejection of that allegiance. Nationalists have every right to reject it. To exclude an Ulster MP in any way from the privileges of Parliament for insisting on the very policy for which his constituents elected him is simply to reassert the inbuilt injustice of Northern Ireland's political condition and to imply that that injustice can only be altered by the gun.

It is as vital that properly elected MPs can take their seats without swearing allegiance to the Crown as it was in the 19th century to allow them to do so without recognising the existence of God. Failure to see this suggests that the British political establishment still understands precisely nothing about Northern Ireland.

Professor ADRIAN HASTINGS
Leeds

No 'right' to have children

Sir: The correspondence about the Child Support Act (16 May) raises ethical and legal questions, some of which are rarely discussed. The general principle of a welfare state is that people who fall on hard times should be supported by the state – that is, the rest of us – and

this applies also to any dependent children they have. Is it right then that society as a whole has no role in saying how many children people should have? I am not suggesting that there should be laws about it; but shouldn't we create a moral climate in which it is considered wrong for people to have children when they are unable to properly support and care for them?

Whenever these issues are raised there are many quick to claim the "right" to have children, and for their work in raising them to be valued. The fact is that, until we find the world actually short of people, those who have no children, or only one per couple, are giving the rest of us far more value by their forbearance, and it is they who should be lauded.

R HAGGETT
Sheffield

Driven out of the building trade

Sir: One other possible cause for the current labour shortage in the construction industry springs to mind ("Skills shortage hits builders", 10 May). Since 6 April this year both the Contributions Agency and the Inland Revenue are querying the self-employed status of thousands of sub-contractors within the industry. Many, like myself, have been bona fide sub-contractors in the eyes of the Inland Revenue since the imposition of selective employment tax in the 1960s, some

30 years ago, even though we are, in the main, one-man bands. Now the Contributions Agency and the Inland Revenue in their information booklets insist that many sub-contractors are not genuinely self-employed and we ought to be employed under PAYE.

As a result, I know that a local plastering contractor has ceased trading – he provided work for seven plasterers; a painting contractor has seen his labour costs rise by 12 per cent and two carpenters, a bricklayer and a handyman have left the industry, perhaps never to return.

ARTHUR STITT
Wootton St Lawrence, Hampshire

Unfair on history

Sir: The perceived difficulty of GCSE history (letter, 13 May) is not the only reason for the decline in numbers taking the subject. Just as important is the squeeze produced by the Government's decision to give technology a free ride. In the school where I teach history, pupils usually take nine GCSEs. In 1996 and 1997 they faced seven subjects, now including technology, which were preselected by the Government. History was one of 14 subjects competing for the last two places.

ELEANOR BENSON
Barnston, Merseyside

Agendums

Sir: Now that two referendums have been announced, may we see new university courses in mediums studies?

COLIN ARCHER
Virginia Water, Surrey

Peace plea in the cycling war

Sir: What seems normal, rational behaviour to one group can scare the bejesus out of another. Cycling up a one-way street or on a pavement is one instance. Cutting left in front of a cyclist because he or she is only on a bike and can't be going that fast is another. Stepping out on to a cycle path without looking is yet another. Three groups with differing paces of mobility sharing two forms of carriageway need to reconcile themselves to tolerance and patience.

DANIELLE BYRNE
London SE11

Sir: As a cycle commuter of some years' experience can I express my fascination as to the selective nature of motorists' perception? On the one hand we have your correspondents who appear to scrutinise every illegal or untoward manoeuvre performed by the cyclists they encounter, and on the other the motorists who daily appear oblivious to cyclists' very existence, to the extent of regularly putting our lives at risk.

Maybe my low opinion of the average driver's skill can be accounted for by the fact that a fair number of them must spend a large proportion of their time behind the wheel composing letters beginning, "Sir: Having been nearly killed in my Volvo recently by a chap on his mountain bike I was outraged to read..."

PHIL MILLER
Nottingham

Sir: Having just returned from a cycling holiday in Belgium, I was interested to read the correspondence you have been receiving concerning the rights of and facilities (or lack of them) for cyclists. Cycling from the port of Ostend through Bruges to Ypres, a total of about 50 miles, almost all of it was spent in the safety of a proper purpose-built cycle lane and not one of the token gestures you often find at the side of some British roads.

MARK LACEY
Salisbury

Sir: These days I find myself swearing more at fellow cyclists than at motorists. Cyclists behave so appallingly partly because they know that the police rarely take an interest. Jack Straw could play a part here, by introducing a "zero tolerance" policy for road users.

Cyclists who ride on pavements, ignore zebra crossings and jump traffic lights would be subject to an on-the-spot fine, as would motorists who, for example, fail to use their indicators. The money collected from cyclists could be used to build motorways, and that from motorists would be spent on cycle paths. Now what could be fairer than that?

TAN SELLEN
London N1

Deep thought

Sir: Where are the media queues at the doors of those brilliant individuals who designed and programmed Deep Blue? Why are their names not on all our lips? Role models should not succeed in silence. Until newspapers and television give these clever people the exposure they deserve we cannot expect sufficient numbers of our teenagers to want to follow in their footsteps. Mathematicians and scientists are not only of value to the community but must be seen to be valued by the community.

LEN SALEM
London W5

Lessons in how to run water

Matthew Taylor

Labour must go beyond mere painting out what it is against

مركز الامم المتحدة

Lessons in how to run water

The companies may let it leak away, but many of us are wasting a scarce resource, says Matthew Taylor

The privatisation of the water industry, a natural monopoly, inevitably brought new problems for the both water users and the environment. In particular, there have been disproportionate increases in water charges in some regions. The consumer has been forced to pay an unfair proportion of the costs of investment in infrastructure and environmental measures. New investment has been and will be needed to maintain quality standards. However, while water bills and water shortages have risen, so too have water company profits, top-level salaries and dividends. It is no wonder that people are angry.

Unlike the Conservatives, the Labour government has at least recognised that the water industry isn't operating in a sustainable way, and something needs to change. Today's water summit must mark the start of a change in direction, and the Liberal Democrats welcome this move as the first step. The summit brings together the great and the good from the Environment Agency, from respected environmental groups, and from the industry to explore ways of dealing with long-term problems. There is much to discuss.

But what of solutions? Many of Labour's proposals are not new but reflect changes already initiated by the industry, the Environment Agency and the regulator. Even before the summit has begun, more controversial measures have been ruled out, including targeted water metering of wasteful users, which can go a long way to conserving our limited supplies (and has already been initiated by some water companies). Will the summit amount to anything more than a talking shop, followed by a rehash of old policies wrapped in New Labour packaging?

If Labour wants to suggest it is a fit alternative to the previous Tory administration, it must go beyond merely pointing out what it is against. The problem

Labour must go beyond merely pointing out what it is against

lems of water resources, environmental and social impacts of water usage, pricing and financing mechanisms need imaginative solutions. I am encouraged that Labour has said that it will introduce tough mandatory leakage targets for each water company. That has long been a Liberal Democrat priority and will be fully backed by the party. The water industry can no longer be allowed to leak away almost 30 per cent of the water in the system.

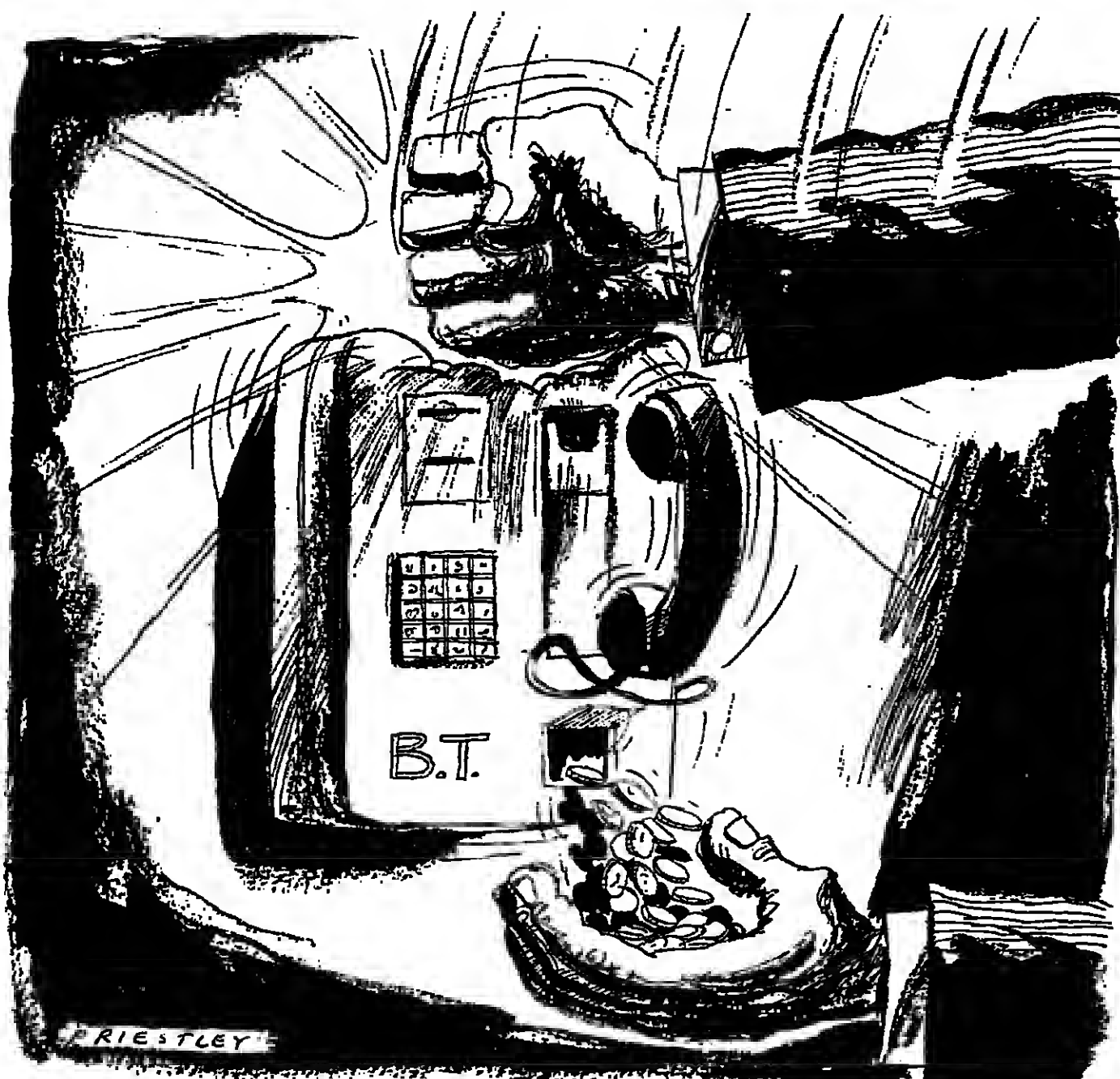
We will also be looking for a review of all abstraction licences in force. Many of these were granted in the past, when environmental standards were lower and there was little in the way of environmental impact assessments. The dried-up rivers around the country are the legacy of this short-term approach. Each company must agree with the Environment Agency and other environmental and consumer groups detailed plans for dealing with drought problems.

We also need to encourage a lifestyle change among the population. Water is a scarce resource. I believe that the best way forward is through the establishment of an independent Water Services Trust, which Liberal Democrats would like to see funded by a 2 per cent levy on excessive water company profits. The Trust would promote water efficiency, provide support for environmental projects of national importance, and help the poorest families with the costs of more water-efficient household goods. The Government itself should play a part by setting new standards in the building and plumbing trades, and by encouraging eco-labelling schemes for water-efficient appliances.

Unlike the present government, Liberal Democrats have not ruled out targeted metering. Metering makes clear to the consumer the value of the resource being used, and provides incentives to conserve water and prevent leaks. A water sprinkler can use in a few hours the water a typical family uses in a week – yet no one needs to use a sprinkler. Trickle-feed systems do the job better for the garden at less cost to the environment, and if people want to go on wasting water they should pay the cost. But for both economic and social reasons, the Liberal Democrats do not support the introduction of universal metering on a compulsory basis. It would, in any case, be staggeringly expensive and that money could be better spent on improving water efficiency elsewhere.

Today's water summit is the first real test of Labour's commitment to the environment. Tough action is needed. The ball is firmly in their court.

The writer is the Liberal Democrats' spokesman on the environment.



Let's have some change from BT

by Polly Toynbee

The penny just hasn't dropped, Sir Iain Vallance just hasn't got it. Nor presumably have battalions of other plutocrats in their glass towers pretending nothing much has changed. The party is over. Sir Iain, affronted that the windfall tax is to fall upon his company, will go to law to stop it and blustered these immortal words: "I wouldn't have voted Labour or put this government into power if BT had been mentioned in the manifesto."

Sorry? Who put them in power? The company bosses who grew so fat off the Tories in the Eighties and Nineties appear not to have noticed that they are certainly not the masters now.

Blair may have told his conquering troops not to crow, but he always said that in victory Labour would do a bit of modest looting and pillaging. It was all spelled out and repeated *ad nauseum* during the campaign. To be sure the windfall tax is a bit arbitrary – most taxation is a bluish instrument – but someone had to pay for the most creative plans in Labour's manifesto. The voters overwhelmingly agreed that getting the young into jobs and training was the most important investment the country could make.

And the voters agreed that the best people to pay for it were those companies that cashed in handsomely when all of our family silver was sold off. Watching the flamboyant greed of some executives grubbing up vast bonuses like pigs after truffles, the public thought taxing the "excess profits" of companies sold off too cheaply was no bad thing. If they had so much to squander on executives like Cedric Brown, utility managers all their lives and good for nothing else, then they must have money coming out of their ears. If they had the money to put second-hand politicians such as Norman Tebbit on their board, as BT did, then they must have money to spare. Blunt, crude, unrefined, ill-informed views maybe – but heartfelt and voted for by the million. Not socialism, just basic indignation.

Sir Iain's ill-judged threats will come back to haunt him. The word is he took his own directors by surprise. It's good to talk, they say, but not always. Ordinary mortals rarely glimpse the life of the great captains of industry. They see the cars, the dinners, the opera boxes and Henley regatta tickets but rarely sniff the aura of absolute power that cocoons them within their own universe. Surrounded by yes-men, by courtiers, by flunkies who do their every bidding, they lose touch with the real world. No mere cabinet minister ever has the sense of power of one of these. (Remember Val-

The company bosses who grew so fat off the Tories appear not to have noticed that they are certainly not the masters now

ance's tin-eared comment about his sizeable salary when he claimed he worked so hard that life as a junior doctor would be "relaxing"?) Out here, Sir Iain, the tectonic plates have shifted, the country is still shaking, there is a bit of a revolution going on in public attitudes and expectations. And however much you think you have earthquake-proofed your tower, it is shaking too.

He said it was his "fiduciary duty" to his shareholders to go to law to challenge Labour's right to impose a windfall tax on BT. BAA followed suit, offering the curious spectacle of erstwhile good causes campaigner Des Wilson earning his BAA salary on the wrong side of the argument. "Fiduciary" is one of those words designed to flummox: "Oh yes, fiduciary, of course, you're absolutely right." But companies are pretty good at forgetting about the fiduciary bit when it comes to spend-

ing money in all kinds of ways (the fat cat bonuses, the Wimbledon tent, the donations to the Conservative Party, executive jets, whatever). And how does Vallance know what his shareholders may feel? I suggest that any of BT's two and a half million shareholders who voted Labour should turn up at the next AGM (mid-July) and demand to know why Sir Iain is wasting lawyers' fees in their name.

His words could not have been worse-framed or worse-timed to bring his company into disrepute. Why, it was on the very day BT announced its £3.2bn profits, enough to pay for the entire windfall tax. (Estimates vary as to how heavily the windfall might fall on BT – around £300-£500m.) BT spends some £200m a year on advertising to make us feel good about them – Bob Hoskins winking winsomely at the camera. BT shareholders might demand to know why at one stroke their chairman has blown away so much of the good-will the company has spent so much on trying to gain. He has badly missed the mood of the times. BT is still a virtual monopoly. It will make its legal challenge in the European courts on the basis

that unlike gas and water, they operate in a competitive market and so any special tax on them amounts to an unfair gift to their competitors. Certainly competition is beginning to bite, but this year when the once-and-for-all tax would be levied, fewer than 3 million out of 22 million households are connected to Mercury or Ionica systems capable of offering a competitive service. BT has 90 per cent of domestic calls; most of us have no choice but to use BT for local calls.

That means that if Vallance proceeds with his court action and large numbers of Labour voters are incensed, there is not much most of us can do to express our anger – except to shout uselessly at the BT operator, the one who says "Operator service, Lisa speaking". For long distance and international calls, we can switch to Mercury. Those with mobile phones connected to the Cell-net system (partly BT owned) could switch to one of the other three companies. Unfortunately it is not as easy to boycott BT as it was for motorists to stop buying Shell over Brent Spar. That is because, whatever Vallance claims about competition, there is not much yet.

But anxious shareholders, wondering if Vallance is really fulfilling his fiduciary duty, might worry about what he has done to his long-term relations with Labour. The *Independent* was always strongly critical of the BT/Labour deal, allowing BT the phenomenally lucrative chance to enter the broadcasting market in exchange for relatively cheaply connecting all schools and libraries to the information superhighway. It would damage the only chance of competition in telephones from the cable network, whose unique selling point is bringing broadcasting with them. In any case, that deal is now less than certain, since BT said it will not provide a nationwide fibre-optic superhighway. Meanwhile, Mercury, BT's main competitor, is gleefully awaiting the new competition law promised in the Queen's Speech, designed to deal with any anti-competitive practices by dominant players, such as BT. Also, BT has entered a colossal deal with Rupert Murdoch's Sky – and we have yet to discover what the new government's true attitude to the galloping Murdoch empire will be.

Before the election, people feared the unions would rush to try New Labour's strength; but now the first assault comes from one foolish section of industry. (Many other industrialists are shaking their heads at BT.) Tony Blair told his MPs, "We are not the masters now" – but that was all pity. Everyone knows they are – except, it seems, for Sir Iain.

Now then children, eat up your sushi

So how did you celebrate National School Meals week? Did you throw an ironic little dinner party of haiseed liver and semolina? Restaurant and cookery guru Prue Leith marked the occasion last Tuesday with an address to the Royal Society of Arts, arguing that children as young as five should be taught that they would find cookery "satisfying, creative and fun".

And who could argue with that? Surely all right-thinking people like nothing better than to dash home from work and rustle up a monkfish ceviche with smoked baby onion marmalade? Britain is a nation of horn-again foodies. Supermarkets now sell such a bewildering array of imported goodies that Channel 4 has a series explaining what the hell to do with that jar of olive paste you bought by mistake. Prime-time television has become a non-stop Open University course in spending more time in the kitchen.

Once upon a time anyone who could run to a cook avoided the kitchen altogether. But the last war finally rendered the "Servant Problem" insoluble; anyone wanting to eat fashionably was obliged to slave over *Good Housekeeping's* chicken supreme and croquette potatoes. Now, after this interregnum of drudgery, the cook and kitchen maid have been replaced by Marks & Spencer and the dishwasher. And what happens? No sooner does the food industry free us from the treadmill of daily food preparation than we hunt for fresh means of enslavement and start smoking our own fish.

Or do we? There is certainly a lot of evidence to suggest that Britain is cooking up a storm: recipe bookshelves are expanding like yeast; stainless steel balti dishes are big business; newsgroups are packed with culinary porn promising 101 Winning Ways with dried salt cod. But how does one square all this with the fact

that we eat more fast food than any other European country? With the fact that *Bella* magazine's readers spend barely an hour a day in the kitchen? Maybe the boom in culinary paraphernalia tells us as much about British eating habits as the expensive tennis racket under my bed tells you about my level of personal fitness.

Of course, much of this Epicurean voyeurism is confined to the sushi-rolling classes. Prue Leith's back-to-basics mission was directed at the children of families who eat exclusively from polystyrene containers. Understandably depressed by the idea of a whole generation that will never know how to grill a chop or mash a potato, she and her fellow cooks invited a London primary school class to the Royal Society of Arts to introduce them to the simple pleasures of food preparation. They got the assembled children to knock up the Nineties answer to the scotch egg: spinach and ricotta

strudels for 200 people. Very useful. Shimmering below the surface of Leith's modest proposal that making pasta from scratch should be part of the curriculum was the perennial foodie assumption: slow food good, fast food bad. In reality, it is not the pizzas and burgers that are unhealthy but that not enough fruit and veg are eaten with them. As long as what people eat is tasty, affordable and nutritious, the amount of time spent folding in the ingredients is an irrelevance. For anyone to spend more hours a day on the basic business of ingestion than they do reading books, talking to their friends and families or making love is ludicrous. Occasional cooking is one thing, but unless you get a genuine thrill out of it, slaving over ricotta strudels on a daily basis is a waste of precious time, and more and more people are having the sense to realise it.

Louise Levene

A strange case of what the eye doesn't see ...

"My grandfather was a professional gardener," said old Lord Callway, as we sat in the club one evening over our brandies and cocoa. "I have never told anyone that before. But it was from him that the family fortune derived. Yes, a mere gardener..."



Miles Kington

"I didn't know it was possible to make a fortune out of gardening," said Major Garforth.

"Well, my grandfather worked on a big estate as a lawnboy. Anyone here know what a lawnboy was?" We murmured ignorance. "There were huge lawns on those old country estates, and they all had to be kept as smooth as velvet in case any of the resident gentry should have a sudden yen to play croquet. So the staff mowed the lawns pretty often, and as you must know if you have ever mowed a lawn, a lawn-mower can be hurt pretty badly by hitting a stone or a piece of metal left in the lawn. It only requires a pair of scissors left on the grass, or a chunk of statuary..."

We all visualised the damage done to a lawn-mower's blades and winced.

"That was what a lawnboy was for. To pick up all those things. It was his job to go over the sacred turf the day before the mowing, or even hours before, and use his keen young eyes to pick up anything left in the grass, no matter how small, in case it should injure the mower. It was tiring and exacting work, because he knew that if he missed anything it might lead to trouble, but it did at least have the compensation that you were allowed to keep anything you found."

"Oh, no," said Lord Callway. "My grandfather got the jewels."

"The jewels! How?" "He happened to pick them up at the same time as he found the glass eye. The man must have dropped them in his flight. My grandfather took a shine to them, and kept them, as it was his right to do. When he grew up he invested them wisely."

"How?" "By going into the arms trade and buying the peerage whose title I am proud to bear," said Lord Callway. "He designed the coat of arms himself. Very few coats of arms include a large eye. Not many people realise it is a glass eye."

The next day I met a nephew of Lord Callway and asked him how much truth there was in the story. Not a scrap, he said, considering the title had been in the family since 1500.

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Giuseppe De Santis

Director of one of Italy's most successful films *Riso Amaro* (*Bitter Rice*), which was nominated for an Academy Award, harnessed by the US Legion of Decency and packed cinemas all over the world, and co-writer of Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione*, the first film to be labelled "neo-realistic", Giuseppe De Santis has an important part in the history of Italian cinema.

In radical articles he wrote for the Italian magazine *Cinema* in the early Forties he advocated a new realistic approach to filmmaking, and in the wake of *Bitter Rice* he was for five years Italy's most commercially successful director. While pioneering neo-realism and promoting his strong Marxist principles, he also maintained popular appeal.

The image of Silvana Mangano (who had been Miss Rome of 1946) clad in shorts and wading in the rice fields, stockings rolled down her thighs, became an icon of Italian sexuality, and his transformation of the actress into an overnight star by celebrating her eroticism created the climate in which Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida (and in France Brigitte Bardot) would become famous internationally.

A vehement anti-Fascist, De Santis incorporated into his films a plea for improved social conditions. Gilles Jacob, director of the Cannes Film Festival, described him as "a great poet of working men and farmers." Born in Fondi, Italy, in 1917,

De Santis grew up in the orange groves and marshes between Rome and Naples. "My friends were barbers, butchers, blacksmiths, masons and cobblers," he said later. "A kind of mistrust had always kept me away from rich kids." He studied philosophy at Rome's Centro Spirituale di Cinematografia, which had opened in 1935 and, though theoretically subject to Fascist control, taught Marxist theories and showed the works of the great Soviet film-makers. De Santis' fellow pupils included Michelangelo Antonioni and Dino De Laurentiis.

In the magazine *Cinema*, edited by Benito Mussolini's son Vittorio and thus allowed more freedom than most journals, De Santis joined other anti-Fascist intellectuals in condemning traditional Italian cinema and on one occasion brutally exposed himself: "A bastard, that's what I am," he wrote, "small, swarthy, hawk-nosed, touchy, suspicious, with a pride and insolence that constantly tear my guts trying to mask the mysterious inferiority complex that assaults all bastards when they are honest with themselves".

In 1940, on a crossing from Naples to Capri, he met Visconti, who was equally hostile to Fascism and the existing film industry. They decided to film James Cain's novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (which had been passed by the censors because it depicted "America's decadence"), adapting it to

"the true reality of our country", and giving it the title *Ossessione*. Because of his earlier studies, De Santis knew more about the technicalities of film-making than his director, but was amazed at Visconti's intuitive grasp of film-making combined with an obsession for realism. The editor Mario Serandrei, after watching the first rushes, said: "I don't know how to define this kind of cinema other than as 'neo-realistic'".

After more writing contributions and work as an assistant director (including on Roberto Rossellini's *Scalpa Mercè*, 1943), De Santis made his debut as a director with an episode of *Giorni di Gloria* (1945), a documentary montage celebrating the Italian partisans' struggle in lyrical Eisenstein-like images.

His first full feature as director was *Caccia Tragica* ("The Tragic Hunt", 1947), which was highly praised for the director's compositional skill and was a key film of the neo-realist movement with its portrait of the chaos and confusion of post-war Italy. This was followed by his sensual study of passions in the rice fields of the Po Valley and the exploitation of women workers there, *Riso Amaro* (*Bitter Rice*, 1949), which established him as one of Italy's best-known directors.

These early films, plus his next two, *Non c'è Pace tra gli Ulivi* ("Under the Olive Tree", 1950) and *Roma Ora 11* ("Rome 11 o'clock", 1952) were praised for

their efforts to promote social reform but criticised for their concessions to commercialism. *Roma Ora 11*, about a crowd of girls seeking employment who are killed when a staircase collapses under their weight, typically combined scathing social comment with sensationalism.

Turning to more intimate dramas later in his career, De Santis saw his reputation diminish, though *La Strada Lunga un Anno* (1958), filmed in Yugoslavia and celebrating the solidarity of unpaid workers, was an impressive example of socialist cinema and won a Golden Globe in the United States along with an Oscar nomination.

In 1964 he directed the first Italian-Soviet co-production *Italiani Brava Gente*, a spectacular war movie which demonstrated that differences between people are now based more on class and occupation than on nationality. De Santis was given a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Berlin Film Festival in 1995. "Italian cinema owes him much," said the director Carlo Lizzani, "for his great films which marked the beginning and evolution of neo-realism as well as for the coherence and integrity that characterised his professional life."

Tom Vallance

Giuseppe De Santis, film critic and director, born Fondi, Italy, 11 February 1917; married 1943 Giovanna Valeri; died Rome 16 May 1997.



De Santis: combined scathing social comment with sensationalism

Cecil Michaelis

Cecil Michaelis will be remembered as an artist who was especially inventive when working with glass and ceramics, and as a philanthropist who was especially generous in encouraging crafts and design.

He was born in Cabourg in 1913, the son of Sir Max Michaelis, a British citizen of German Jewish extraction who donated (in that same year) a major collection of Dutch art to Cape Town, where he had made his fortune. Sir Max died early in 1932. Cecil Michaelis's interests were to be divided between England, where he bought Ryecote Park in Oxfordshire in 1935, South Africa, which he regularly visited, and France, where he lived for most of his life. Some air of the English squire clung about him even in the most bohemian Parisian ateliers, and his very disdain for convention had a distinctly mandarin character.

He invented his own ceremonies, especially in Provence, where he compensated for his cosmopolitan background by an austere reluctance to eat – or serve – anything other than local produce. His genius was most in evidence there, in the garden he created below Mont Saint-Victoire, where the sun set through the cypresses he had planted, illuminating walls and fountains of coloured glass bricks he had invented: in the home he adapted and decorated, where apricots and walnuts lay in African baskets beneath rows of his richly glazed and vigorously gesticulating pots. On the



Michaelis: a disdain for convention and a distinctly mandarin character

terrace, guests picked, with a device he had created, at miniature snails which had been permitted to spend their last morning grazing, on fennel, whilst he described with elegant humour the antics of the surrealists or the life cycle of the cicada.

After studying at the Ruskin School, Michaelis left Oxford in 1932 for Paris, where his teachers were Henri Dutilleul and Othon Fritsz, and where he was advised and encouraged by Georges Rouault and André Derain. He counted many artists among his closest friends, including Matthew Smith and André Masson, the jeweller and metal-worker Jean François Victor Hugo (who introduced him to novel possibilities in sculpture),

and the architect Fernand Pouillon, who made him aware of the monumental opportunities for glass and ceramic.

He drew ceaselessly – a sketchbook was always in his pocket – exercising a special talent for witty, vital but unflattering silhouettes of figures and animals in action. A talent that was well adapted to small sculpture and to the decoration of tiles. The ceramic and mosaic panels he designed for the swimming pools on ocean liners, and the prismatic glass walls he made for cinemas in the 1950s, evoke the honk and stamp of jazz. By contrast the cityscapes, executed with heavy impasto over long periods in the 1960s and 1970s, not only eschewed the deftly linear but depicted spaces

inhabited only by light and often almost eerily silent.

Although Michaelis had many exhibitions in commercial galleries in London, Paris and the United States (the earliest being at the Redfern Gallery in London in 1941), he came to dislike this type of promotion. It offended his preference for a collaborative and collegial spirit in the production of art and the complex blend of pride and humility in his character.

By sharing a studio in Aix-en-Provence, Jean Buffle, he not only provided Buffle with new opportunities but encouraged artist friends in Paris to work there and extend their interests. The edition of bronze and porcelain sculpture he made for the Worcester Royal Porcelain factory in the Sixties is one of too few creditable episodes in the history of the British ceramic industry in recent decades. He also did much to encourage the development of such an industry in South Africa.

Ryecote School (now Ryecote-wood College), founded in 1937 to provide training in carpentry and agriculture, was one of the earliest institutions he supported; the Institute at Montebello, founded in 1950 in the Cape Province to rectify the neglect of native materials and local traditions in South African industrial design, was the most recent. But his support of numerous individuals was even more notable. He had no great

expectations of gratitude and his optimism triumphed over many betrayals, which were described in his anecdotes merely as quaint deviations from decent behaviour.

The Second World War was spent in farcical conflict with philistine senior officers and in a series of picaresque episodes – ski training in Chamonix with the Scots Guards (rehearsing for a Norwegian expedition that never took place); drawing stags and designing bomb-proof architecture with the SOE in the Scottish Highlands; learning Arabic on a dangerous, solitary, secret (and pointless) mission to Tangiers; teaching southern Italian village potters to make



Glazed vase by Michaelis, 1951

teapots for the invading British troops. Or so one might suppose from his recollections.

In fact he also played an important role in propaganda (and became a close friend of Leslie Beck, head of Psychological Warfare in France), was a vital contact with France Libre, with which his first wife, Marie-Alix Dard, was closely involved and to which he gave extensive financial assistance, and made many charitable and cultural initiatives. He sent a cheque of £1,000 to General de Gaulle and one of the same amount to Admiral Muesel shortly after their arrival in Britain in the summer of 1940 and in advance of their official recognition by the British Government. Far larger sums were devoted in the following years to the convalescent home for French naval forces at Beaconsfield and the French military camp at Camberley. In October 1945, he was awarded the Croix de Guerre avec étoile d'argent.

Entering Paris on the day of liberation with Lesclapart's division in 1944, he met the artist Lili Lobuf, whom he married in 1947. After her death in 1987, he married Amata Mettenheimer.

Nicholas Penny

Maximilian Gustav Alfred Cecil Michaelis, artist and philanthropist, born Cabourg, France 19 August 1913; married 1935 Marie-Alix Dard (two sons, one daughter; marriage dissolved, 1947); Lili Lobuf (died 1987); 1988 Amata Mettenheimer (died Aix-en-Provence 3 May 1997).

Canon Perceval Hayman



Hayman: humour and humanity

Perceval Hayman was an interesting and enjoyable mixture of man. His ministry as an Anglican clergyman was varied yet straightforward – senior chaplain of Marlborough College for 10 years and then for 20 years vicar of Rogate and Twicken in the West Sussex countryside and rural dean of the Midhurst deanery.

But it was against this background that he emerged as a gifted, thoughtful and original character. Through his humour

and humanity he made intelligible to many people the practice of Christian life, and through his sermons and talks an open-minded and generous approach to the problems of faith and doctrine.

His interests, learning and activities were multifarious. He brought to all of it organising skills, developed in his war service as Technical Adjutant of the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars, and later as a staff officer in the War Office dealing with

the supply of army fighting vehicles. He also at this time wrote part of the official history of tank warfare.

Hayman was born in Manchester in 1915, the son of Perceval Hayman, a barrister and county court judge, and of Susan Mount Hartley of Fence-Pendle, Lancashire. After the war, as a lay reader he eventually came forward for ordination, trained at Lincoln Theological College and was made deacon in 1950.

At Marlborough (1953-63) he had an active interest in the archaeology of Wiltshire, taking school parties to Stonehenge and other sites. He taught generations of boys the skills of building and dry-stone walling, which he had acquired on the Lancashire estate of his boyhood.

He was a competent sailor, a good amateur actor and a crack shot, having been a member of the army rifle team. His thoughtful energy as a clergyman found expression in his

founding in 1971 of the Rogate and Twicken Housing Association to provide sheltered housing in the heart of the village, a commitment which widened out when he became chairman of the Chichester Diocesan Housing Association in 1973.

As a parish priest and pastor he played a leading part in establishing the Bishops' Council for Pastoral Care and Counselling, and its work among clergy, where his influence and insight were greatly valued. At

the heart of it all was his home presided over by his wife Sylvia, a lady of exceptionally warm heart and possessed of a highly original personality which found expression in many a happy and unexpected view of life and turn of phrase.

Perceval Hayman was a big handsome man with a penetrating gaze and with undomestic and compassionate concern for all those with whom he came in contact.

† Simon Phipps

Perceval Erroyd Cobham Hayman, priest, born Manchester 22 March 1915; ordained deacon 1950, priest 1951; Senior Chaplain, Marlborough College 1953-63; Vicar, Rogate, Chichester 1963-81; Rector, Twicken 1963-81; Rural Dean of Midhurst 1972-81; Chairman, Chichester Diocesan Housing Association 1973-81; Canon and Prebendary, Chichester Cathedral 1977-94; married 1939 Sylvia Gamble (died 1996; one daughter); died Weymouth, Dorset 12 May 1997.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

MARSH: Sadly, on her birthday, 13 May, Marion Elton of Oatland, Surrey, Much loved mother of Ann and widow of Doug, Funeral at St Mary's Church, Oatland, on Friday 23 May at 11am. No flowers please, but donations if you wish, to the British Heart Foundation or a charity of your choice, through Ebbett Funeral Services, High Street, Liphedford, RH8 0DR.

IN MEMORIAM
JAMES: Beloved husband (Babu), 19 May 1992, in our hearts always. Sheila and family.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent to writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £5.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Birthdays

Lord Bowness, solicitor, 54; Mr Christopher Chope MP, barrister and former government minister, 58; Mr Francis Cornish, Senior British Trade Commissioner, Hong Kong, 55; Dr Edward de Bono, Secretary-General, Supranational Independent Thinking Organisation (SITO), 64; Dame Ann Eborworth, High Court judge, 60; Mr James Fox, actor, 58; Baroness Hylton-Foster, patron, British Red Cross Society, 89; Mrs Helio Jackson MP, 58; Mr David Jacobs, radio and television presenter, 71; Sir Igor Judge, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 56; Air Chief Marshal Sir Thomas Kennedy, Lord-Lieutenant of Rutland, 69; Mr Robert Kilroy-Silk, television presenter, 55; Mr Oliver Letwin MP, 41; Mr John Lyons, former General Secretary, Electrical Power Engineers' Association, 71; Mr Michael McGowan, MEP, 57; Mr Noel Mander, organ maker, 85; Mr Paul Moriarty, actor, 51; Sir Edward Parkes,

former Vice-Chancellor, Leeds University, 71; Dr Max Perutz, molecular biologist, 83; Mr Leslie Sands, actor and playwright, 76; Sir Michael Scott, former diplomat, 74; Professor Gordon Stoeck, chemist, 72; Mr Pete Townshend, guitarist and singer, 52; Mr Sandy Wilson, composer and playwright, 73; Miss Victoria Wood, writer and comedienne, 44.

Anniversaries

Births: Jacob Jordans, painter, 1959; Sir George Prevost, soldier and statesman, 1767; Dame Nellie Melba, singer, 1861; William Waldorf Astor, second Viscount Astor, 1879; Viscountess Astor (Nancy Wiche), 1879; Ho Chi-Minh, Vietnamese leader, 1890; Deaths: Alcun, poet and scholar, 804; Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII, executed 1536; James Boswell, biographer of Dr Johnson, 1795; Nathaniel Hawthorne, novelist, 1864; William Ewart Gladstone, statesman, 1898;

Thomas Edward Lawrence, archaeologist, soldier and writer, accidentally killed 1935; Charles Edward Ives, composer, 1954; Ronald Coleman, actor, 1958; Frederic Ogden Nash, writer and humorist, 1971; Sir John Betjeman, Poet Laureate, 1984. On this day the Spanish Armada set sail from Lisbon, 1588; the Légion d'Honneur was instituted by Napoleon, 1802; the Tonga Islands were annexed by Britain, 1900; the Simpon Tunnel was officially opened, 1906. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Calixtus and Parthenius, St Catin of Viterbo, 1588; the Legion of Honour was instituted by Napoleon, 1802; the Tonga Islands were annexed by Britain, 1900; the Simpon Tunnel was officially opened, 1906. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Calixtus and Parthenius, St Catin of Viterbo, 1588; the Legion of Honour was instituted by Napoleon, 1802; the Tonga Islands were annexed by Britain, 1900; the Simpon Tunnel was officially opened, 1906.

Lectures
National Gallery: Manuela Mena, "Ideas behind Velázquez's Las Meninas", 1pm.
Victoria and Albert Museum: Diva Patel, "Contemporary Prints from India and Pakistan", 2.30pm.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment honours the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11.30am. F Company Scots Guards march the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Welsh Guards.

The following notes of judgments were prepared by the reporters of the All England Law Reports.

Planning

Kent County Council v Secretary of State for the Environment; CA (Belton LJ, Swinton Thomas LJ, Otton LJ) 29 April 1997.
Article 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988, which permitted as development the deposit of waste materials from industrial process defined as the breaking up or demolition of any article, was wide enough to cover waste from the demolition of walls, buildings, etc and the breaking up of roads, driveways and paths. The company had not, therefore, acted in breach of its planning consent by depositing such waste on a site of outstanding natural beauty.

Richard Glover (Council Solicitor) for the appellants; Nathalie Lieven (Treasury Solicitor) for the first respondent; Keith Lindblom QC and Philip Peachey (Knocker & Foskett, Sevenoaks) for the second respondent.

CASE SUMMARIES

19 May 1997

Sentence

R v Pitt; CA Cr Div (McCowan LJ, Ognall J, Sedley J) 29 April 1997.
Although courts quite properly took the view that offences committed with knives had to be dealt with very severely, where a man protecting his wife and children had armed himself before confronting and killing the victim, who had arrived outside his house with his friends, drunk and shouting, a sentence of 7 years' imprisonment was appropriate.

Roderick Denyer (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for the appellants.
R v Lard; CA Cr Div (Lord Bingham LJ, Latham LJ, Poole LJ) 24 April 1997.
A judge in sentencing a defendant who had pleaded guilty to having an imitation firearm with intent to commit an offence to 3 years' imprisonment, had approached the sentencing exercise correctly. However, the sentence had not adequately reflected the mitigating features of the case,

and would be reduced to 2 years' imprisonment.
Nicholas Paul (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for the appellants.

VAT

BMW (GB) Ltd v Commissioners of Customs & Excise; QBD Crown Office (Lis (Keene J)) 24 April 1997.
The crucial characteristic of the term "business entertainment" in art 5 of the Value Added Tax (Input Tax) Order 1992 was that such entertainment was provided to a recipient free of charge, whether or not the provider received money from elsewhere. The provider was not, therefore, entitled to credit for VAT on supplies made to the recipient.

Keith Preece QC (Clerks, Reading) for the taxpayer; Alison Foster (C&E Solicitor) for Customs & Excise.

Customs & Excise v Ferrero UK Ltd; CA (Lord Woolf MR, Hutchison LJ, Mummery LJ) 6 May 1997.
RSC, O 55 r 7(5) did not give the court hearing an appeal

from the VAT tribunal power to remit a case to a different tribunal without considering the merits and quashing the decision appealed against. In any event, the question whether a product was a biscuit (zero-rated) or confectionery (standard-rated) was a question of fact and degree for the VAT tribunal to decide.

David Ewan (Taylor-Johnson Garrett) for the taxpayer; Melanie Hall (C&E Solicitor) for Customs & Excise.

Nuisance

Cunningham v Birmingham City Council; QBD Div Ct (Phillips LJ, Auld J) 6 May 1997.
The proper test to apply, in assessing whether or not premises were in such a state as to be prejudicial to health under s 79(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, was an objective one. There was, therefore, no duty as such to consider the particular health requirements of the occupier.

Richard Gordon QC, Rod Henderson (McGrath & Co, Birmingham) for the appellants; James Findlay (Council Solicitor) for the respondents.

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business & city

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BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

France casts doubt on Guinness merger

John Willcock

The £23bn proposed merger between Guinness and Grand Met is about to face a new obstacle from the French authorities, which are worried that control of the global distribution of champagne is falling into British hands.

From the French point of view the proposed formation of GMG Brands is not about Scotch or stout, but about the world distribution of champagne.

According to international trade sources, the French government is preparing to lobby by Brussels when the latter examines the proposed merger.

One source says: "There is no way the French establishment is going to allow the entire future of the French champagne industry to be agreed by a bunch of pin-striped rosbifs in London's merchant banking parlours."

Guinness already has an exclusive world distribution deal with the world's biggest (by bot-

tleage) champagne company, Moët Hennessy. At stake, therefore, is the world's biggest-selling brand, Moët et Chandon, as well as the company's other brands - Veuve Clicquot, Dom Perignon, Mercier, Pommery and Canard Duche.

Guinness owns 34 per cent of Moët Hennessy while the French luxury goods group LVMH, headed by Bernard Arnault, owns the rest. Mr Arnault is also the largest single investor in Guinness with 14.2 per

cent of the stock. He also sits on the Guinness board. The French establishment is concerned about bow influence over the distribution of champagne will change following the merger. Moët Hennessy is locked into an exclusive global deal with GMG Brands under the terms of the merger, and Mr Arnault's stake in Guinness will be diluted to just 7 per cent.

"He will change from being one of the most important shareholders in Guinness to just another portfolio investor," says one observer.

Meanwhile GMG Brands will sell Moët Hennessy's champagne through the world's biggest drinks sales network, which will include joint ventures in the US, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, South America and Western Europe.

Mr Arnault has already voted against the deal and proposed an alternative - the creation of a single company combining the drinks sides of

GrandMet, Guinness and Moët Hennessy. This company would be floated off.

This plan has got nowhere so far, and the French authorities are concerned that the creation of GMG Brands will leave the majority of French champagne being distributed by a British company, with Mr Arnault left on the sidelines despite his majority ownership of LVMH.

The Brussels authorities are expected to start inviting formal

submissions on the proposed merger within a fortnight.

Suggestions that the French might intervene over the champagne issue drew a dismissive response from Guinness/GrandMet. The American drinks group Seagram and Allied Domecq are both expected to make representations to Brussels, and sources suggest they may be used as "stalking horses" by the French authorities casting doubts on the deal.

A spokesman for Guinness/GrandMet rejected fears on the champagne front.

"There is no sovereignty issue," he said. "French champagne producers will get even better distribution around the world [through GMG Brands], which is what Mr Arnault wants anyway. The champagne companies do remain absolutely under French control."

The spokesman also denied reports that the companies would have to sell off drinks brands such as VAT 69 or Dewar's.

Rebel florists request advice from QC

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The battle for control of Interflora is set to take a decisive turn this week when the new board of directors running the business receives legal advice which will determine whether they can press ahead with a sweeping review of the flower delivery organisation.

The new management claimed written advice from a barrister, which could arrive today, should back up the controversial decision to ignore calls for a postal ballot of members on the ousting of the previous board a week ago. A mass meeting of almost 1,000 member florists at Warwick University had voted narrowly to dismiss the 11-strong board after complaints about increases in annual subscription charges.

David Parry, the outgoing chairman, had immediately called for a postal ballot of the entire 2,600 membership of Interflora, a mutually owned company, in the hope of overturning the vote. Last Friday a petition of 400 florists sympathetic to the old board was delivered to Interflora's headquarters at Seaford in Lincolnshire.

Under the organisation's articles of association the management apparently has to hold a full ballot if backed by sufficient members.

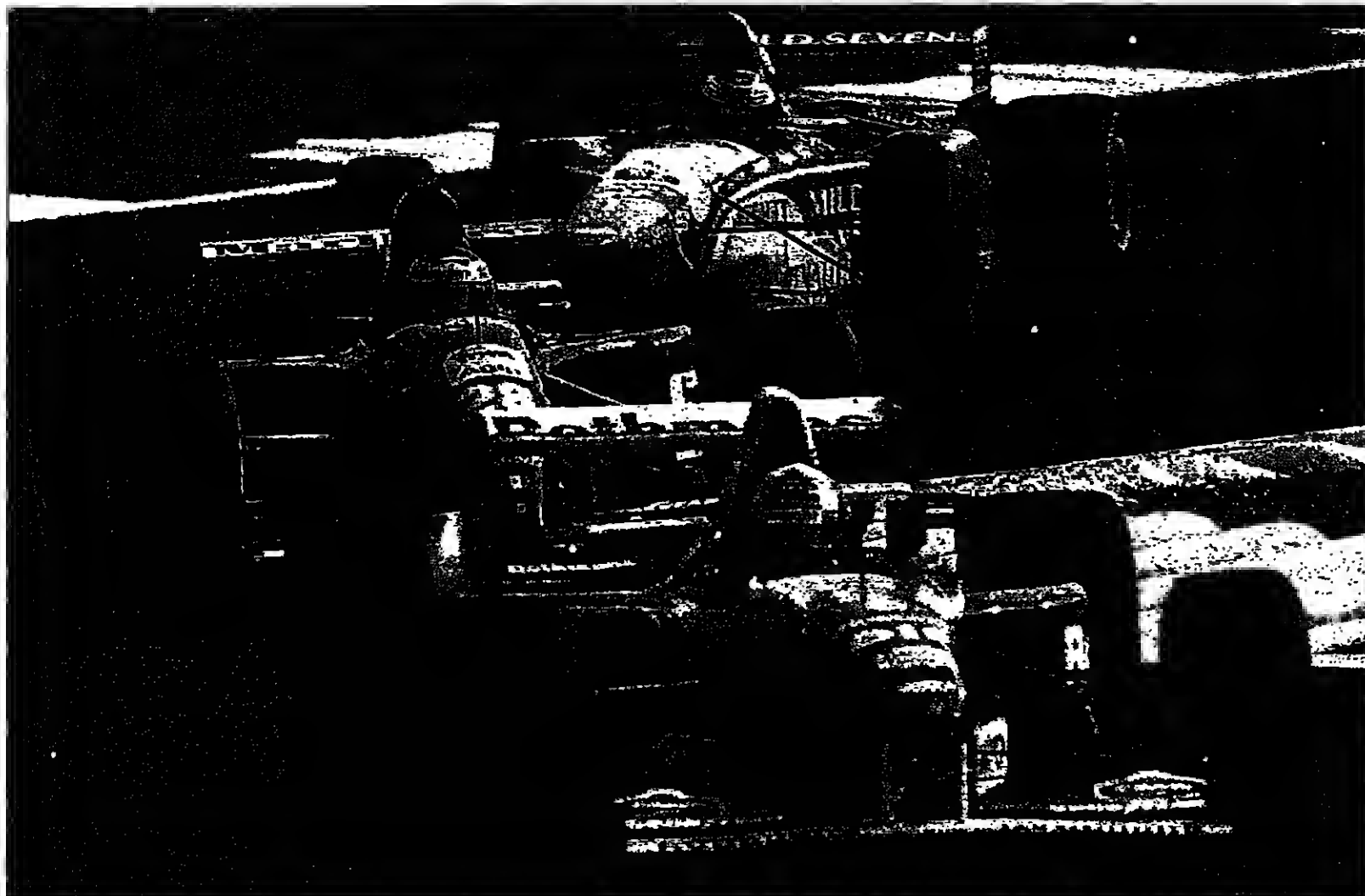
However Geoffrey Hughes, the replacement chairman appointed by the rebel florists, was confident that legal opinion would show the result at the meeting could stand.

"We've received support from hundreds of members saying they voted with their feet for a new board and the postal ballot would be a nonsense. Our solicitors have advised me the call for a postal ballot is not legal in the way it is being done, but we've taken advice from a Queen's Counsel."

The advice could determine whether the outgoing management's radical plans to turn Interflora into a fully fledged company can proceed. Mr Parry has already said he may take legal action himself if the new board continues to refuse to hold a ballot. The row has already resulted in the resignation of Brian Ward as company secretary.

Mr Hughes, who runs four shops in Bristol and Weston-super-Mare, vowed to press ahead with a probe into the business, which runs the central administrative organisation of Interflora with an annual turnover of around £100m. He said he needed to make a "stringent review" of his finances, though he denied that the rebels were opposed to modernising Interflora's structure.

"I'm having every single nook and cranny investigated. There are one or two internal matters which will become clear in the next few weeks," said Mr Hughes.



On board: The race teams and track operators will hold a combined stake of 10 per cent in the company, which will be listed only in London

£2bn price tag on Formula One

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Formula One, the motor racing group, is set to announce details of its forthcoming stock market flotation with sources close to the negotiations saying an official statement could be made as early as this week.

The price tag attached to the business will be around £1.5bn-£2bn, far less than originally anticipated. However the timetable of the float has been accelerated with advisers to the once-stalled listing saying it should be completed by July.

The on-off float has been given the green light after Formula One entrepreneur Bernie Ecclestone managed to secure

the agreement of the racing teams which compete in the Grand Prix events. The terms of the listing will see Mr Ecclestone's stake reduced to around 30 per cent, worth up to £600m.

The race teams such as Williams, Ferrari and McLaren, and the track operators, will hold a combined stake of 10 per cent. The Fédération Internationale de L'Automobile (FIA), which owns the rights to Formula One racing, will also hold 10 per cent. The remaining 50 per cent of shares will be offered to outside investors.

However, insiders say the deal is so complex that the timetable and the details on eventual shareholdings could be subject to change. They could

not confirm whether all the racing teams had agreed to the terms. The teams were described as being "broadly on board".

It was a potentially damaging dispute between Mr Ecclestone and the teams which threatened to scupper the listing. The dispute centred on the details of what was included within Formula One's ownership. FIA has agreed to cede the rights to Formula One for 25 years in return for a stake in the quoted company.

The scale of the Formula One float is far more limited than earlier suggestions. Initially the business was scheduled to be valued at around £2.5bn with listings on stock markets around

the world. It is understood it will now be a London-only listing.

Details of the float plans were revealed to City analysts last Friday, along with information on the board structure. Helmut Werner, the former head of Mercedes-Benz, will be the Formula One chairman with Mr Ecclestone as chief executive. Marco Piccini, the former manager of the Ferrari Formula One team, will be deputy chief executive. David Wilson, the former finance director of Hilton Hotels, will be finance director. Robert Rowley, finance director of Reuters, and Walter Thoma, head of Philip Morris's European operations, have been named as non-executive directors.

Salomon Brothers, the investment bank which is advising on the float, has also revealed trading forecasts for the company. Indicative figures show it should make a pre-tax profit of £85m this year on turnover of £200m.

Mr Ecclestone is hoping to make more use of the Formula One brand. He has plans for a chain of themed restaurants while branded merchandise will be sold trackside. There are also plans to extend the number of racing circuits which play host to the Grand Prix events.

Mr Ecclestone is keen to include Korea and Malaysia. The inclusion of more Asian events would boost the sport in these emerging markets.

Welfare state 'has reached crisis point'

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The welfare state has been a catastrophic failure and the state should stop funding anything beyond a minimum safety net, according to a provocative new paper. Rather than divert resources from social security to health and education, as the Government plans, it should slash taxes and let people pay for their own welfare services.

The suggestion comes from historian Robert Skidelsky in a paper published today by the Social Market Foundation. He is to present it at a conference due to be attended by Frank Field, Minister for Welfare Reform, tomorrow.

The paper's diagnosis of the problem, although not its solution, has much in common with Mr Field's analysis, set out in a series of books and papers when he was just a maverick backbench opposition MP.

Lord Skidelsky argues that the welfare state has reached a crisis because voters have become increasingly unwilling to pay taxes to fund increased spending. The reason is there has been too much incentive to cheat the system, making poverty self-perpetuating and creating "an apparently insatiable demand" for state support.

His proposed solution is the abolition of National Insurance contributions. The average taxpayer would gain about 20p in the pound as a result, and could afford to pay for private

insurance against unemployment and old age, and for private education and healthcare.

The Government's job would be to run a stable economy with high employment, and to provide through much lower taxes a minimum level of social security and basic services. "High employment is the most basic type of social security and by far the cheapest," he writes.

Lord Skidelsky addresses the argument that public provision of health, for example, is cheaper and more efficient than private insurance, saying: "Cost control achieved by screwing down public sector pay and rationing custom by queue or exclusion undermines its morality and legitimacy."

He concludes that the welfare state has not abolished poverty or inequality, and has created permanent budget deficits. These deficits prevent governments from stabilising the economy.

The paper proposes a two-tier system of a tax-financed safety net topped up by low levels of compulsory private insurance. People who could afford extra insurance or private purchases would be able to spend more. The paper argues against the Government's plans to redirect public spending from social security to health and education. The demand for these two categories rises faster than national income. Public spending is unlikely to be able to keep up, leaving the perpetual perception that they are "underfunded".

Comment, page 14

IN BRIEF

Co-op members denounce Regan bid

Members of the Co-operative Wholesale Society queued up to denounce Andrew Regan's failed £1.2bn bid for the business at its annual meeting in Manchester at the weekend. Ten speakers voiced their support for a motion proposed by the Scottish Southern regional committee. It urged the elected board "to take all necessary steps to ensure the society's assets are secured for current and future members".

The vote was passed by 70,384 to 0. Pat Watters of the Scottish Southern region said that although the CWS had stopped the Lanica bid it could not afford to be complacent. He went on to criticise the Co-op executives who were sacked for their role in the Lanica bid. "They came from outside the movement and hopefully they will now be outcasts from society. People like that deserve all that comes to them."

BDB to challenge digital TV licence bid

Rival business groups bidding for digital terrestrial television licences stepped up their battle over the weekend as news emerged that British Digital Broadcasting (BDB) was likely to challenge Digital Television Network's (DTN) bid in writing. This will represent BDB's response to a letter from the Independent Television Commission (ITC) last week asking for comments on whether United News & Media's involvement with DTN constituted a "material change" to DTN's proposal.

United, Lord Hollick's media company, said earlier this month that it would take a 30 per cent stake in DTN if the latter won the digital terrestrial licence. The investment would amount to £120m over four years. BDB is owned by Carlton Communications, Granada and BSkyB.

Lonrho plays down JCI merger talks

Lonrho played down weekend press reports that it was in merger talks with JCI South Africa's first black-controlled mining company. A Lonrho spokesman said yesterday: "We are aware of JCI's interest but any talks have been purely introductory." The spokesman added that following the sale of the Metropole hotels and the African sugar interests, Lonrho was now in a strong position and in no hurry for a deal. Although JCI is the world's sixth-highest producer of gold, Lonrho was also talking to other parties about deals and joint ventures in mining, Lonrho said.

Names offered shares in CIT

The Conversion Investment Trust (CIT) is offering Names at Lloyd's of London shares and warrants in CIT in exchange for the Names' funds in the insurance market. This will enable Names to exchange unlimited liability at Lloyd's for limited liability from January 1998. CIT is being assisted by LRG Cater Allen and is also proposing to float on the London Stock Exchange.

Lack of skills limits recruitment in UK

Lack of skills is preventing 53 per cent of companies in the UK from taking on staff at the moment, compared to just 43 per cent of companies across the EU. According to a survey by accountants Grant Thornton published today 55 per cent of EU firms believe that social charges and employment taxes stop job creation, rising to 63 per cent in France and 77 per cent in Germany. In the UK this falls to just 17 per cent. The survey also found that only 1 per cent of UK companies found that trade union restrictions limited recruitment, with the EU average at 13 per cent and 16 per cent for Germany.

Leamington Spa tops the town rich list

The genteel Warwickshire town of Leamington Spa has emerged as Britain's most prosperous town for the second year running. According to a survey published today by Dun & Bradstreet, Leamington Spa has the highest proportion of profit-making businesses in the country, writes Nigel Cope.

Middle England performed well in the survey with Warwickshire listed as the most profitable county ahead of County Antrim and Herefordshire. The West Midlands was the most prosperous region followed by the North-west and the East. Ninety two per cent of Leamington Spa's businesses made a profit last year, compared to 96 per cent the year before.

Ten of the best ... and worst					
The top ten			The bottom 10		
Rank	Town/City	% In profit	Rank	Town/City	% In profit
1	Leamington Spa	92.5	212	Wilton on Thames	71.7
2	Barnet	92.4	202	Great Yarmouth	71.7
3	Gloucester	92.4	202	Godefrims	71.7
4	Rotherham	92.1	205	Widford	71.4
5	Chesham	91.8	206	Wigan	70.6
6	Hatfield	91.7	207	Stirling	70.2
7	Durley	91.6	208	Darlington	69.8
8	Salisbury	91.6	209	Grays	69.3
9	Swindon	91.5	210	Stirling	69.0
10	Eastleigh	91.2	211	Abingdon	68.3
			212	South Wirral	68.0

Philip Mellor, Dun & Bradstreet's senior analyst, said: "These figures illustrate the strength of the Midlands economy. Geographically Middle England led the country out

recession. It is now playing a leading part in the recovery."

Mr Mellor said Leamington Spa's success owed much to the improved communication links both by road with the M40 and

direct rail from London. He said the town had experienced a slump in its motor industry in the early 1990s but had rediscovered itself as an engineering centre with a widespread of business-

es. "It's blend of businesses has ensured its success. So often a town is over-reliant on a particular sector and when that sector falters, the whole town or city goes down with it. Leamington Spa has a good mix."

South Wirral came bottom of the survey with just 66 per cent of its businesses making a profit. The fishing port of Grimsby took a sharp tumble in the rankings. It came top three years ago but slipped to 201 last year. Mr Mellor said the decline was due to intense competition in the food processing industry.

The survey was based on Dun & Bradstreet's database of key British enterprises which details the profit and loss accounts of 50,000 of the largest companies in the UK.

STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield (%)	Dividend	Dividend Yield (%)	Dividend Payout Ratio (%)
FTSE 100	4693.90	+63.0	+1.4	4693.90	4056.60	3.47	140.00	3.00	100.00
FTSE 250	4525.70	-0.5	-0.0	4728.40	4469.40	3.58	140.00	3.00	100.00
FTSE 350	2272.10	+24.6	+1.1	2272.10	2017.90	3.49	140.00	3.00	100.00
FTSE SmallCap	2316.79	+8.7	+0.4	2374.20	2178.29	3.02	140.00	3.00	100.00
FTSE All-Share	2230.98	+23.0	+1.0	2230.98	1899.78	3.46	140.00	3.00	100.00
New York	7269.67	+100.1	+1.4	7333.65	5032.94	1.71	140.00	3.00	100.00
Tokyo	20324.73	+521.9	+2.6	20324.73	17303.85	0.821	140.00	3.00	100.00
Hong Kong	14062.37	+131.6	+0.9	14193.58	12095.17	3.051	140.00	3.00	100.00
Frankfurt	3604.55	+42.1	+1.2	3604.55	2848.77	1.521	140.00	3.00	100.00

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES

UK interest rates									
US interest rates									
Money Market Rates									
Rate	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Rate	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year
UK	6.25	6.88	7.05	8.04	7.11	8.17			
US	5.66	6.22	6.88	5.45	6.99	6.90			
Japan	0.44	0.69	2.82	2.41					
Germany	3.33	3.31	5.77	6.45	6.54				
Bond Yields									
Rate	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	Rate	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
UK	6.25	6.88	7.05	8.04	7.11	8.17			
US	5.66	6.22	6.88	5.45	6.99	6.90			
Japan	0.44	0.69	2.82	2.41					
Germany	3.33	3.31	5.77	6.45	6.54				

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises - Top 3	Falls - Top 3
Renold Int'l 459	Chiroscience Gp 308.5
China Energy 599.5	Burton Gp 140
Praxair 221	MRI Furniture Gp 125.5

CURRENCIES

Pound vs.									
Dollar vs.									
Close	Week's chg	Year Ago	Close	Week's chg	Year Ago	Close	Week's chg	Year Ago	Close
\$ (London)	1.5375	+1.95	1.5117	£ (London)	0.6107	-0.73	0.6815		
\$ (New York)	1.5370	+1.95	1.5115	£ (New York)	0.6109	-0.75	0.6812		
DM (London)	2.7740	-2.30	2.8231	DM (London)	1.8941	-3.44	1.9368		
¥ (London)	168.845	-18.238	181.225	¥ (London)	115.325	-11.410	126.695		
¥ Index	96.6	-1.3	84.5	¥ Index	101.8	-4.1	97.0		
OTHER INDICATORS									
Close	Week's chg	Year Ago	Close	Week's chg	Year Ago	Close	Week's chg	Year Ago	Close
Oil Brent \$	19.57	+0.73	18.89	RPI	156.3	+2.49	150.9	19 May	
Gold \$	344.25	-1.65	382.00	GDP	109.7	+2.50	107.0	25 May	
Gold £	210.23	-3.36	259.31	Base Rates					

هكذا من الاصل



GAVYN DAVIES

The target for the current year could be as low as £11-12bn. This could be reduced by about £7bn next year as a result of the public spending straitjacket, and by a further £3.5bn as a result of a halving in ACT

Take some corrective measures, add a fair wind

To the extent that there was any sensible discussion during the election campaign of Britain's budgetary problem - and it would be stretching a point to say that there was any at all - it was dominated by the so-called "black hole" in the government accounts.

This black hole came in various shapes and sizes. To some, it referred to the relatively trivial matter of the loss of privatisation receipts of about £1.5bn a year if Labour won. To others, it represented the more significant matter of the Government's "structural" budget deficit, which concerned serious commentators such as Andrew Dilnot at the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Practically no-one, in my recollection, suggested that the PSBR might not prove to be a problem at all, and indeed that with a few corrective measures from the new Chancellor, it might disappear altogether within a couple of years. Yet disappear it might, with a fair wind, by the end of the next fiscal year.

Of course, the disappearance of the PSBR would not necessarily imply that the fiscal position in this country is satisfactory. After all, the budget surplus earned for a short period under Chancellor Lawson occurred when the budgetary stance was too loose. The same could happen again, and it is certainly important not to get too mesmerised by impressive-looking PSBR data at the peak of an economic cycle. But those who are thumping the table about the need for large consumer tax rises have got the problem out of scale. We are out facing a rerun of 1993, when the PSBR approached £50bn, and it is about time this was acknowledged.

David Walton of Goldman Sachs has recently published a study showing how the PSBR target of £19bn in 1997/98, which was bequeathed by Ken Clarke in Gordon Brown, could actually turn into an outcome of less than £12bn.

First, the £3.6bn undershoot of the PSBR from last year, which was primarily caused by a bounce-back in tax receipts relative to forecast, will probably get carried through into this year's numbers. Second, the tumbling unemployment figures will knock around £0.5bn off social security spending. Third, the impact of the windfall tax on the privatised utilities will probably be to reduce the PSBR this year by at least £2bn.

(The total windfall levy of say £5bn will probably be taken in two equal instalments, so £2.5bn will come in this year, while only about £0.5bn is likely to be disbursed in special job measures.) Add to a very modest consumer tax increase of say £1-2bn, probably involving a much more significant reshuffling of the tax system netting out to this amount, and the Chancellor could quite easily announce a post-Budget PSBR target of £11-12bn.

Then there is the even better outlook for next year. Assuming, as seems virtually certain in this summer's Budget at least, that Mr Brown sticks to his predecessor's public spending targets, it is already estimated that revenue will grow much more strongly than spending in 1998/99.

Assume that revenue grows in real terms by about 3 per cent, a little faster than GDP, and that spending grows by the planned 1 per cent. This alone knocks a further £7bn off the PSBR next year. But even that is not all. Recent data shows that receipts



Tricks of the trade: Gordon Brown could balance the budget next year

from corporation tax are rising much more strongly than anticipated, and - profits growth suggests that this might well continue next year, notwithstanding the worrying rise in the sterling exchange rate. Furthermore, there is one tax change which Mr Brown might announce in the summer 1997 Budget which will not impact revenue until next year.

This concerns the arcane but important matter of reducing the rate of advance corporation tax from the present 20p to (say) 11p or even zero. Although this sounds like a tax cut, it in effect does two things.

First, it permanently increases the tax paid on company dividends by tax-free institutions such as pension funds. A cut in ACT from 20p to 10p actually doubles the effective tax rate paid by pension funds on dividend receipts, and this raises about £3.5bn in a full year.

Second, however, the cut in the ACT rate temporarily reduces the amount of corporation tax paid in the first year, though this effect is entirely neutralised in future years.

If the Chancellor halved the rate of ACT from July 1997 onwards, it would have virtually no effect on receipts in the current financial year, but would raise the full £3.5bn from next year onwards. (In the very long term, part of this revenue gain would probably be eroded as companies top up their payments into pension funds, and claim these payments against their mainstream corporation tax liabilities, but the IFS says that these offsets are not likely to be very large for several years.)

We can therefore now see how a balanced budget in 1998/99 could possibly be achieved. Remember that the target for the current year could be as low as £11-12bn. This could be reduced by about £7bn next year as a result of the public spending straitjacket, and by a further £3.5bn as a result of a halving in ACT.

Add in a little extra revenue from the natural buoyancy of corporation tax and the PSBR has disappeared altogether. And this would have been achieved with only a very moderate frontal assault on the personal sector, amounting to perhaps £1-2bn this year.

This could readily be accomplished by po-

litically feasible tax changes, including an increase in petrol duties and the gradual phasing out of mortgage tax relief.

In view of all the pessimism that has been around on the state of the public accounts, this seems almost too good to be true. So where are the flies in the ointment?

There are several. First, there would be some net increase in personal taxation, which may prove politically difficult, even though none of Labour's explicit election pledges would be breached. The ACT change may look like a painless tax, but it would reduce expected returns on pension investments and hit the stock market, and the pension industry would make every effort to make this very visible to the electorate.

Second, there would still be the problem of actually living with the very restrictive public spending totals set by Mr Clarke. This may prove politically infeasible in 1998.

Third, there would probably still be some economists who would continue to claim that the public accounts were in a mess, since a halved budget at the top of a boom would not be deemed good enough for them.

Fourth, very little would have been done to slow the growth of consumer spending, since neither the windfall tax revenue, nor the ACT change, should be counted as contradictory in terms of their impact on demand. More work would undoubtedly be needed on the interest rate front.

Of these problems, by far the most significant is the absence of any significant planned growth in real public services in the next two years. If the budget cannot be balanced next year, it will be because these targets eventually have to be relaxed.

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news

Glyndebourne's chorus of approval

As the new season opens, **Michael Church** finds the doors are opening wider

For those abjuring helicopter and Merce, the Glyndebourne experience starts at Victoria, where dinner-jackets mingle with beggars like glossy black crows among scavenging pigeons. The crows swarm on to their train to devour their Sunday papers, many are reading an article entitled "Soap Opera", which recounts backstage events at another house of culture which is prominently in the news.

The train makes an unscheduled stop for engineering works, but the crows are unperturbed - the guard has been obsequiously assuring them every five minutes that their special bus has been re-routed, and they won't miss their show.

Today is the first day of the new season. A watery sun, a gentle breeze, cows and sheep grazing in the distance - and the stately social saraband starts again.

The best picnic spots by the ha-ha have been claimed with wicker bampers by the early birds; neat sit-up-and-beg dinners for four are being laid under trees. Couples stroll by the lily ponds.

Some groups seem to be posing for Quality Street commercials, others in straw boaters and long dresses are playing Chekhov. They are not so much smart as moneyed-provincial; the pace is wonderfully sedate. The first corks pop. The outlook is fair.

But rich-philistine gibes are better aimed elsewhere. On Saturday night, at Covent Garden, I was stuck behind a bunch of boneheads who were audibly mocking events on stage, and who would clearly have been happier in Raymond's Revue Bar.

Their boss had presumably doled out the tickets; this is the unacceptable face of sponsorship, and you don't meet it at Glyndebourne, where the connoisseur-count is high. Of course, there's still a strong whiff of exclusivity. If you're a chap, you wear a DJ, or a white tux (or - my dear! - a gold silk one). If you're a smart designer, you wear a Chairman Mao jacket and forget the bowtie. I spy just one gent in a Harris tweed suit, looking like the star of one of Bateman's "The man who" cartoons.

But there's not doubt about it, Glyndebourne is opening its doors steadily wider. Ninety per cent of this season's tickets may already have been sold to patrons and 'friends', but the rest are up for grabs, and include standing-room places for £10. And new audiences are being built.

A couple of months ago the place was overrun by kids from local schools who had come to watch their mates perform a streetwise work by a writer from *The Bill*. Backstage, meanwhile, a different kind of access obtains: the chorus and



A night at the opera: Lord and Lady Boston of Faversham strolling by the lake at Glyndebourne (above), and guests bringing out a hamper at the interval

Photographs: Kalpesh Lathigra



understudies are music students, awaiting their big break. This place in fact has every reason to congratulate itself: its entire history is a triumph. Its first building went up in 1934 without a penny of public money; its

second, three years ago, did likewise. It's the one commercial success in a field littered with failures: last year it actually made a profit.

When the curtain rises on the first act on Puccini's *Manon*

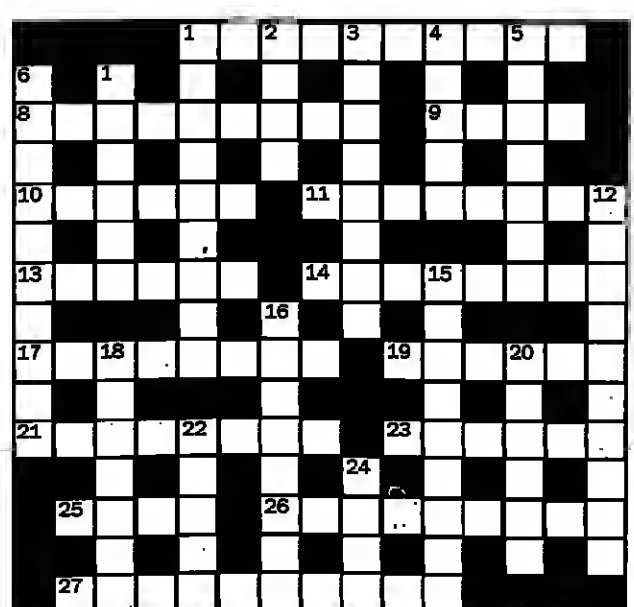
Lescote, and Richard Hudson's crisp, clean, honey-coloured set stands revealed, that triumphal sense is reinforced. Apart from an unfortunate temporary loss of linkage between the chorus and John Eliot Gardiner's band in the pit, the thing bows bravely along, and the lovers are hit the requisite *coup de foudre*.

Are the punters happy? Very much so, is the general verdict in the first interval. Any regrets for the Glyndebourne of old? Not really; some miss the old auditorium's intimacy, and some slyly admit that they're not over the moon about the house's widening social catchment. One patrician American is at first too deaf to bear my question - "Put your ears in, dear!" snaps his wife - but after a pause he delivers an oracular judgment: "This is still a great place, but what it's lost is its *uniquely*."

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3302, Monday 19 May

By Fortia



ACROSS

2 Run well organised match (2,8)

8 Nice suit fit at last (9)

9 Sounds like coarse fish (4)

10 Against one's investing in river scheme (6)

11 To be caught like this is unexpected (8)

13 Motion soldiers in front to leave (6)

14 Extremely tired of layabout (8)

17 Contained exquisite object inside that's timeless (8)

19 Also note a fashionably dressed person (2,4)

21 German regret over a certain amount that's horrible (8)

23 Moderate means (6)

25 Border of shelf is out of line (4)

26 Duty officer? (9)

27 Love pale green variety for flavouring (6,4)

DOWN

1 Oil-fired pump? (6,3)

2 Overturned objection by a music producer (4)

3 Woolly breed of cattle (8)

4 Cover put over pitch (5)

5 Point to new make of implement (7)

6 Anne's girl is upset about dead bird (10)

7 French wine writer (6)

12 Community show resolution (10)

15 Paid Rex less to organise distribution (9)

16 Stock response to fright (8)

18 Fail to establish European right (7)

20 Giving up a dig that holds key to mystery (6)

22 We hear English novelist's unrelenting (5)

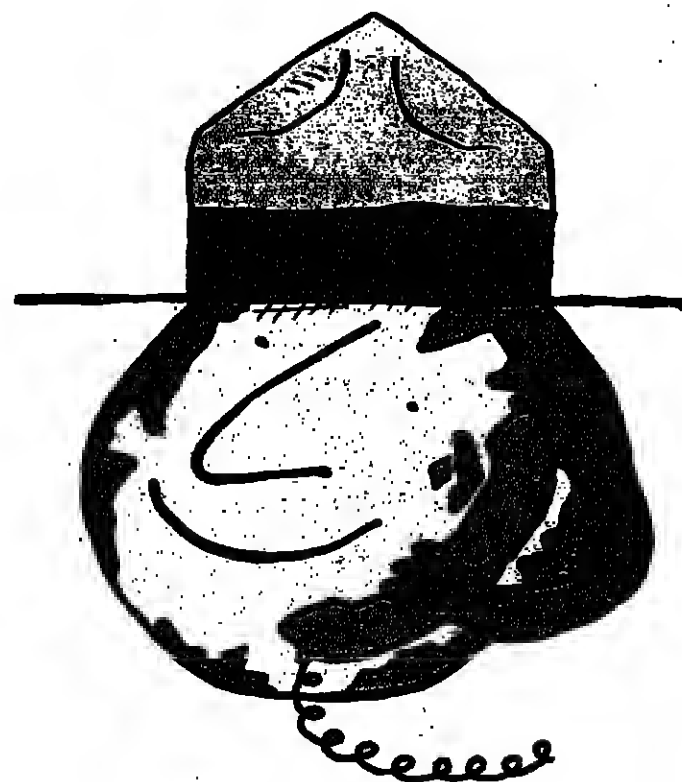
24 Pain comes from a chest injury (4)

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